COMMONWEAL

$2.00 April 7, 1995

PRIESTHOOD

Going Which Way?

NUMBERS DON'T LIE
Richard A. Schoenherr

WHY PRIESTS CAN'T PREACH
Dennis Burke

BISHOP JOHN ENGLAND
Leonard Swidler

'PRIEST' (the movie)
Richard Alleva

Karen Sue Smith reviews 'Robert Hovda: The Amen Corner'

The Editors

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CORRESPONDENCE

Holystic medicine?

Walnut Creek, Calif.

To the Editors: Further on media knowledge of religion [February 24]: An interview in the *San Francisco Chronicle* [February 5] made reference to a cancer patient going to Lourdes, followed by a helpful editorial explanation: "(a foreign hospital)." LEON LUKASZEWSKI

Praise plus a footnote

Chestnut Hill, Mass.

To the Editors: I enclose a check for membership in the Commonweal Associates. I do so having just finished reading the issue reporting your symposia on the media and religion. The issue made for fascinating reading—and indicates once again why *Commonweal* is so essential to the Catholic intellectual climate in the United States.

Incidentally, George Meany, to be sure, must have responded that he simply wanted "more" for workers, but I think it was Samuel Gompers who used that same phrase some years earlier in differentiating the goals of the American Federation of Labor from those of more ideologically oriented groups such as the International Workers of the World.

WILLIAM B. NEENAN, S.J.

The writer is academic vice-president and dean of faculties at Boston College.

Correction: The Office of Media Relations of the United States Catholic Conference informs us that Father Brendan Smyth did not serve in Bismarck, North Dakota, as our "Report on Ireland," states (March 10, 1995). We apologize for the error.

For the Record: Except where otherwise indicated, the Bible translation used in Jack Miles's March 10, 1995, article "A Literary Reading of the Book of Proverbs" was *The TANAKH: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Jewish Publication Society, 1985). Reprinted by permission.

Utility infielder

Corona, Calif.

To the Editors: With reference to your special issue on religion and the media, I have been following the work of one of your Forum panelists, John Dart, in the *Los Angeles Times* for many years. Interestingly, he's a versatile writer, having covered one of the sports venues at the 1984 Olympics—another commentary on the way newspapers treat their religion specialists.

PATRICK J. MURPHY

Read it and weep

Huntington Beach, Calif.

To the Editors: We often hear the maxim, "No news is good news." Unfortunately the media have transposed it into "Good news is no news." They've transformed it even further: "Bad news is good news!"

RAYMOND P. GAUER

Coverage overdone

Lupton, Mich.

To the Editors: Re: "Religion & the Media." Before Pope John Paul II visited Detroit, church officials asked and received plenty of media coverage to hype the event. When the big day came the streets were empty, and the visit was an embarrassing failure. The reason was, complained the officials, that the media overdid their job, causing people to stay away out of fear that it would be too crowded. HENRY ELDEN

Sharing of one loaf

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: Congratulations to *Commonweal* for Nathan Mitchell's splendid article on Eucharistic presence [January 27] and his later response to Robert Imbelli's letter [March 10]. There should be no conflict between the Christological (or pneumatological) and ecclesiological dimensions of the Eucharist, much less between "horizontal" and "vertical." Certainly there is none if we believe that Jesus is Lord, the Head of the ecclesial body that celebrates the Eucharist.

Imbelli's advocacy of moving the sign of peace (and unity and reconciliation) to a position after the general intercessions is sound, for traditional and biblical, liturgical and ecumenical reasons. But the reason he advances is dubious indeed. If the desirable change does take place, it must not be at the expense of the ecclesial and communitarian nature of the eucharistic meal, where we are the common (and not merely personal or individual) companions of God. The holy Bread is not broken to divide the community into isolated souls, but to bring us together in the sharing of the one loaf, as in the same cup; the communion song sung by all should show that we share in the common meal of the Christian family.

Marilyn Kramer [Correspondence, March 10] repeats a common fallacy, that the reformed "liturgy does not permit any space or quiet time for such contem-

(Continued on page 29)

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COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXXII, Number 7

Correspondence: 2
Editorial: 3
Notebook: *Patrick Jordan* 4
Liberation from lies: *John Rodden* 5
A bishop who cooked: *Dolores R. Leckey* 7
Democracy's future: *David R. Carlin, Jr.* 8
Cyber campus?: *Abigail McCarthy* 9
Numbers don't lie: *Richard A. Schoenherr* 11
Why priests can't preach: *Dennis Burke* 15
An Americanist hero: *Leonard Swidler* 18
Poetry: *Stephen Stepanchev* 20
Screen: *Richard Alleva* 22

BOOKS

Pattern of Redemption, by Edward T. Oakes: *Robert P. Imbelli* 24
Robert Hovda: The Amen Corner, edited by John F. Baldovin: *Karen Sue Smith* 25
Religious booknotes: *Lawrence S. Cunningham* 27
'God does not need our lies': *Thomas J. Shelley* 31

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Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome but must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Where are we going?

Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, S.J., died on March 15. From labor priest to pioneer for Spanish-speaking migrants, this scholar and activist expressed "a unity of person and purpose," as his homilist, Joseph O'Hare, S.J., said, that graced the church, the City of New York, and the tens of thousands who encountered him as presider, professor, sociologist, and advocate for the poor.

His death and funeral Mass came as this issue of *Commonweal* was wending its way to the printer—a providential reminder of the priestly vocation gracefully lived. For the articles and reviews in the following pages—though remembering great churchmen Robert Hovda, Michael Kenny, John Tracy Ellis, John England—clearly reflect the troubles of the priesthood. Priests today report that they often feel demoralized by overwork and scandal, while to the rest of us, the future of the priesthood seems ever more precarious. The media and other segments of the larger society, sometimes including Catholics, have made the priest an incomprehensible figure, and an object of fun or scorn (*see*, Richard Alleva's review of *Priest*, page 22). In these difficult circumstances, the life of Father Fitzpatrick reminds us of what a glorious calling he answered, of the great good he did, and of how light the burden seemed in a life filled with such grace and intelligence.

Too often we forget his kind in the midst of a heated and very badly skewed discussion.

What are the problems? Richard Schoenherr looks at the demographics of priests and people (*see*, page 11). The downward trajectory of ordained ministers continues and so does the upward trajectory of the American Catholic population. By 2005, Schoenherr writes, there will be only about 21,000 active diocesan clergy, 40 percent fewer than the 35,000 in 1966. More dramatic than plain numbers is the ratio, which begins to suggest the workload parish priests will bear: the ratio of people to priest in 2005 will have nearly doubled to 2,200 active Catholics per priest (it was 1,100 to one in 1975).

Schoenherr's essay looks at causes and consequences, at structures and attitudes, at resistance and reform. No predictions about the next decade or the one after are foolproof or free of preferences. Schoenherr's preferences are clear. They are also the preferences of the vast majority of American Catholics: "the time for [male] celibate exclusivity has run out." But except for a few courageous bishops, the episcopacy follows Rome and refuses to address the problem, at least publicly. Interim remedies are adopted; some tasks and reponsibilities are shifted to lay women and men; and prayers are offered for an increase in vocations to the celibate priesthood. As Schoenherr sees it, the whole church faces a complex problem: there is the problem itself; then, the struggle to define the problem; and finally, the denial that a problem exists, followed by efforts to suppress any discussion.

One result is that expectations of change sprout untamed and unpruned: Not only

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"Bye now, keep the faith!"

will married men be ordained, but women will as well; former priests, now married, will be welcomed back to ministry; celibacy will become a marginal and purely individual choice within a church where a married clergy becomes the norm; etc. Such "solutions" are "agreed upon" by almost everyone before there has been public acknowledgment by the hierarchy that continuation of the celibate priesthood as we know it has become highly unlikely.

Commonweal has editorialized over the years in favor of a married clergy and does not grasp the barriers the Vatican raises to the ordination of women. Our position has not changed. Along with many American Catholics, we assume that time, local conditions, common sense, and the Holy Spirit will move us along. And yet..., we acknowledge a troubling paradox in settling on the ready and seemingly obvious solutions.

Expectations of change grow exponentially while the possibilities remain so limited. What are they? Look to our common Christian tradition: In the Orthodox church a man is permitted to marry only before ordination, while bishops are drawn from a small pool of celibate men, often monks. This two-tiered clerical status excludes most priests from the episcopacy. Is this a happy alternative to the Roman practice? The Anglican Communion and many Protestant denominations have both married bishops and women priests, but all of them are grappling with declining numbers and a crisis of evangelization. Is this the road the Catholic church should follow? Don't we see here a crisis of leadership far deeper than will be resolved by the marital status or gender of the clergy?

Why do we think that a married clergy or women priests and bishops will resolve the dilemma confronting the church in an age deeply antithetical to both hierarchy and sacramentalism? The contradictions between our individual, everyday experience—which places such a premium on self-determination, self-reliance, and self-"fulfillment"—and the profoundly communal dying to "self" to which the church calls us, lie deeper than issues of gender equality and require a more detached evaluation of the witness of celibacy than most of us are able to summon easily.

The Christian churches, including the Catholic one, are plagued today by a diminished sense of the transcendent and an ever-enlarging sense of the immanent: we are full of the human meaning of God and of creation; drawn hither and yon by the effort to be relevant. The priestly state is not the only one that carries a sense of the transcendent. Still, the current decline in the number of Catholic priests in Europe and the United States invites a form of bean-counting that leads to a seemingly obvious solution: allow priests to marry, and ordain women. Aren't these steps that should be called for on their own terms and on their own merits, not simply because we have run out of one kind of priestly candidate and must recruit another? We wonder whether reformers, having latched onto the priest shortage as a prod, do not still need to enter a deeper level of reflection about the priesthood and the future of the church with some of the larger contradictions between theology and culture in mind. After all, Rome's dismaying inaction gives us plenty of time.

Some people have found a tension in the writings of Vatican II between the egalitarian overtones of the "People of God" and the unique role the priesthood plays in the church's hierarchical structure. *Lumen gentium* speaks of how the People of God "in its inner structure is composed of various ranks....Each individual part of the church contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole church" [13]. In this view, the priest is "set apart"—and is seen to be set apart by celibacy and his sacerdotal power—as a sign of holiness for the people as a whole. As Catholics know better than most, ordination is far from a guarantor of personal holiness or pastoral integrity, nor are only male celibates capable of making Christ present to the world.

In contemplating the future of the priesthood, we should be on guard against collapsing these tensions between the immanent and the transcendent, between clergy and laity, which so characteristically shape the Catholic experience. The holy lives that have sprung from honoring this paradox within the Body of Christ are among the many gifts that the life and work of Joseph Fitzpatrick call to mind.

NOTEBOOK

THE CARDINAL RULE

'VILLAGE VOICE' MEETS TOWN CRIER

I really don't have anything against the *Village Voice*. Like Woody Allen or West Forty-second Street, it's just there, an undeniable part of New York City life. Besides, I'm in favor of people reading. Who knows, maybe someday they'll pick up *Commonweal*. I will admit that the *Voice*'s ad pages are a bit much for me: all that flesh. But I suppose Thomas Aquinas would argue there's a

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place for such things, given it's a fallen world.

And you don't *have* to buy it. I rarely have, except when a visitor was coming to town and needed to know about off-off-Broadway, or a friend was looking for an apartment. I do remember some good reports on the antiwar movement, the farm workers, and, more recently, the homeless in New York. And I recall meeting Vivian Gornick when she came to the Catholic Worker to interview Dorothy Day. The article she wrote was first-rate, and so was the photograph that accompanied it. And, of course, there is always Jules Feiffer.

So when the *Voice* called *Commonweal* recently and wanted some information about our position on welfare reform, I wasn't adverse to talking with a brother journalist. *Commonweal* had just completed its special February 24 issue on "Religion & the Media," where it was pointed out—among *many* other things—that there is a lot of ignorance among members of the media. Since one of the "spiritual works of mercy" is to instruct the ignorant, why not try?

So with modest brilliance (or was it abiding naiveté?), I talked with the reporter. When asked why I thought the Catholic bishops weren't speaking out more on welfare reform, I told him I wasn't an expert on what the bishops were thinking or doing—half the time I'm not sure what *I'm* thinking or doing—and that he ought to call the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. I gave him the name of someone in the know. In response to further queries, I made some theoretical observations—a bad decision, it turns out—on why the bishops might not be taking on the Contract with America, point by point. I also faxed him *Commonweal*'s editorials and several strong statements by the bishops and Catholic Charities on the welfare reform.

I didn't think what I had said could be gotten so very wrong.

But think again. When the quotes attributed to me appeared in the *Voice*'s February 28 media column, they were used to bludgeon the bishops, particularly New York's Cardinal John O'Connor, for their tepid defense of the poor, especially unmarried women with children. And to demonstrate just how uninterested and unfeeling some of these prelates were, I was made to say that "there are some bishops who would not be concerned with cutting off benefits to unwed mothers."

I was soon on phone and fax, telling my brother journalist at the *Voice* that I had never said such a thing, in any voice; never thought it; and couldn't imagine a bishop saying it. In fact, just the opposite is true. "But that's what our notes say you said," the reporter reported in Orwellian parlance. So how could he retract what he said I said, if I said what I said in the notes? he said. Now I felt I was in a Feiffer cartoon.

After that conversation, I understood a little better how I had been misquoted. It seemed the *Voice* had been on a fishing expedition to get the cardinal. (In New York, it happens all the time. On March 18, the *Times* published a photograph of this year's Saint Patrick's Day Parade grand marshal, none other than Cardinal O'Connor. It was not a photo that would turn you green with envy. The cardinal looked like Drosselmeier from *The Nutcracker* ballet, his hands aflutter, his mouth contorted in what might be a Bronx cheer. Someone at the *Times* had to search hard to find that one on the proof sheets.)

But there are two other possible answers for why what I said was misconstrued, and I think the second has such a commanding valence that in this case it easily intertwined with and overtook the first.

1. The *Voice* columnist genuinely wanted the bishops to speak out more forthrightly on behalf of the poor (although he seemed unaware that they had been doing so for years; perhaps the *Voice* had't covered it).

2. Even though the church may be one's best ally on a given issue—such as the one in question—its hierarchy is always fair game for criticism because of the church's teachings on sexuality. When it comes to belittling such beliefs, never a lick amiss.

Two issues later (March 14), the *Voice* did print my letter criticizing its faulty reporting, and followed it up with a reply from Richard Goldstein, author of the original column. "Jordan made his statements in an interview with the *Voice*," Goldstein wrote. "I am glad to have them clarified." But Goldstein is still not very clear. *This* Jordan never made the statement in question, period. The *Voice* will have to take full credit.

Even in opinion pieces, there is a cardinal rule in reporting: Get it right. It's a Sisyphean task in a fallen world, to be sure. But it's the only reason for a reporter to be out there every day in the first place.

PATRICK JORDAN

REPORT FROM BUCHENWALD

LIBERATION FROM LIES

USES (& ABUSES) OF HISTORY

Later this month, former inmates from thirty-five nations will meet at the Buchenwald concentration camp to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of its liberation—or "self-liberation."

Located in eastern Germany—150 miles south of Berlin and just a ten-minute ride from Weimar, prewar Germany's cultural capital—Buchenwald was the largest *Arbeitslager* (labor camp) in Nazi Germany. Technically speaking, it was not a *Vernichtungslager* (extermination camp). Unlike Auschwitz, Buchenwald had no gas chambers. Although thousands of prisoners died in gruesome SS medical experiments or were killed in torture cells such as the infamous "Bunker," many more inmates were worked to death. Manning excruciating sixteen-hour shifts in the stone quarry or in a nearby munitions factory, usually with meager rations, they perished of illness and malnutrition. More than 250,000 men and women suffered imprisonment at Buchenwald between 1937 and 1945; 56,545 died there.

Historians are uncertain whether to speak of the camp's liberation or "self-liberation." On April 11, 1945, with the Third U.S. Army commanded by George S. Patton only a few kilo-

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meters away, more than 5,000 SS soldiers fled Buchenwald, leaving a mere handful of watchtower guards (perhaps no more than a half-dozen) to police the prisoners.

Apparently aware of the SS flight in the face of the American advance, hundreds of the 21,000 inmates stormed the watchtowers at 2:45 P.M., and overwhelmed the guards. At 3:15 P.M., a Communist inmate proclaimed from atop the main portal: "The camp is free!" Minutes later, an advance unit from the Third Army entered the camp gates. Upon entering Buchenwald, the top American officer from the advance unit, Captain Fred Kieffer, did not have the impression that any battle had taken place to overcome the SS guards.

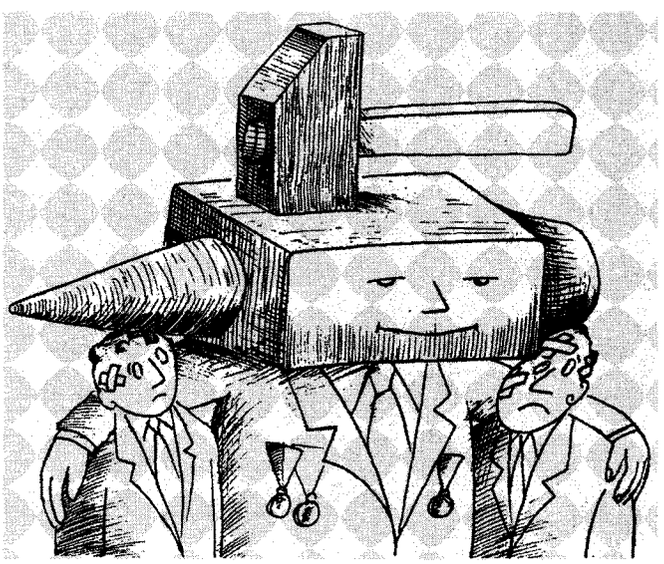
And yet, until 1990—throughout the Communist era of the German Democratic Republic (GDR)—East German officials had always spoken of the heroic, Communist-led uprising on April 11. The GDR exploited the story of Buchenwald to legitimate the Communist state. The role of the Third U.S. Army in the camp's "self-liberation" was not mentioned in the camp museum set up by GDR authorities after the war; GDR exhibits stressed instead the role of the Soviet occupation army in the months following the camp's dismantling.

So the fiftieth anniversary memorial of Buchenwald will also mark another kind of liberation: the unfettering of the Buchenwald camp from the agitprop circulated for forty-five years by the GDR government.

"We care about *history* here now, not about arousing and exploiting emotions," Director Volkhard Knigge told me. "That was the task before: to use—and often *mis*use—those emotions. We want now an attitude of sobriety and empathy, not passion, toward these horrors of history."

An eleven-member historical commission has designed a new Buchenwald museum, whose exhibits tell the true story of not only the camp's liberation, but also the two phases of its postwar history, about which GDR officials had kept a total silence: Buchenwald's reopening as an internment camp by Soviet occupation authorities during 1945–50, and the GDR's propagandistic use of the camp during 1950–89.

Historians estimate that 32,000 to 40,000 Germans were imprisoned in the Soviet internment camp. Unlike Buchenwald under the Nazis, the Soviets did not torture the German inmates. But conditions were harsh, rations meager. Families were not notified of inmates' whereabouts. Nor were the prisoners permitted to write letters or receive visitors, which sometimes happened under the Nazis. Inmates had no contact whatsoever with the outside world.



Under these conditions, up to 13,000 German prisoners—among them hundreds of anti-Stalinist critics, along with thousands of low- and mid-level Nazi officials—died of starvation and disease. Estimates are uncertain because the victims were buried in unmarked mass graves and Soviet authorities kept sketchy records. Some outspoken Germans—such as Duke Joachim-Ernst von Anhalt—experienced the nightmare of all nightmares: incarceration for anti-Fascist opposition under the Nazis, and then re-imprisonment by the Soviets for anti-Stalinist criticism.

And then came the GDR cover-up. Visitors were never told about the Stalinist camp, or much about the non-Communist inmates under the Nazis. For example, the camp museum scarcely mentioned the 11,000 murdered Jews—the major group of Nazi victims. Instead, the stress was laid on the fallen Communist heroes, such as Ernst Thaelmann, the head of the German Communist party who was assassinated in Buchenwald on August 18, 1944.

Because he wants the Buchenwald Memorial to serve history, not ideology—Right or Left—Director Knigge says he has no interest in promoting "*Heldengeschichten*" (stories of heroes). In the new Germany of 1995, he says, a rigorously historical Buchenwald Memorial can contribute to understanding the crimes committed in this century by both the Right *and* the Left. However, he cautions against "simplistically equating" the crimes of the Nazis and Communists at Buchenwald, since part of the task of understanding the camp's past entails sensitivity to the historical details and their particular differences.

Before leaving the camp, I watched the film *O Buchenwald!* Although the film was produced under the GDR regime and emphasizes the role of German capitalism in the rise of fascism, the film is relatively nonideological and is still shown to camp visitors. Included in the film is the concentration camp "hymn," known as "The Buchenwald Song," which the inmates themselves wrote and were forced to sing as a work brigade song by the Nazi guards. It includes these lines:

Despite all we shall say "Yes" to Life
For sure the day will come
When we are free.

To the Nazis, the day of freedom for the inmates meant an ignominious death; but for many prisoners, "The Buchenwald Song" represented a defiant "We Shall Overcome."

To commemorate their liberation a half-century ago, some camp returnees, in a gesture of mourning and solidarity, will again sing "The Buchenwald Song" on April 11.

JOHN RODDEN

John Rodden teaches in the communications department at the University of Texas at Austin.

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MICHAEL KENNY, R.I.P.

A BISHOP WHO COOKED

HE LIVED SIMPLY, AND FULLY

His signature was simple: Michael, preceded by a cross. We at the Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women, and Youth of the NCCB knew it was Michael Kenny, bishop of Juneau, Alaska. I used to imagine Paul of Tarsus similarly signing off, and first-century Christians of course knowing who it was. After all, he was unforgettable and (I imagine) unconventional.

So was Bishop Michael Kenny, who died unexpectedly of a brain aneurism on February 19, 1995, in Jordan, the land of Paul. Not long before his departure for Jordan, chancery staff had heard him singing "Michael Row Your Boat Ashore." And why not? He loved music and frequently sang on all kinds of occasions: in the workplace, grace before meals, during the Mass. But this time he said to several people that he wanted that particular song sung at his funeral. Now people recall the line about the River Jordan being so deep and wide.

He was only fifty-seven when he encountered the absolute depth of the Jordan River, and every one of his years was lived with energy and creativity. I always had the impression that he was delighted to be in the company of Jesus. Saint Irenaeus's dictum that the glory of God is man fully alive was a perfect fit.

From 1987 through 1993, Kenny was a member of the Committee on the Laity with special concern for the needs of youth and young adults. He would arrive for a meeting having left his documentation at home, in Juneau. I'd give him a new set which he would quickly leaf through while I presumed him unprepared. Then he'd discuss, thoroughly, the contents. It took a while for me to realize that, in fact, he had a near-photographic memory, not only of reading material, but of presentations that he'd heard, as I discovered first hand. In 1990, my husband and I journeyed to Juneau, where I was the keynote speaker for a diocesan convention. After the evening presentation, driving back to his residence, Kenny recounted not only the main points of my text, but the details, the flourishes, the small touches. He knew it all.

To be in Juneau in a setting of natural wonder (the Mendenhall glacier near at hand), where youthful optimism and adventure are woven into the atmosphere, is to see how suited the bishop and his diocese were to each other. With only a handful of priests in ministry, the diocese—a cluster of islands, each with a blend of ethnic culture and symbols, from Russian to Tlingit—depends on a dedicated corps of lay ministers. They—the laity—were treated as partners by their bishop who wanted more than anything a dynamic sense of mission for the church of Juneau. That relationship called forth loyalty and love on both sides of the equation.

We stayed in the bishop's residence during our week in Juneau; but the bishop was there for only part of the time. The first night our host, who it turned out was also a gourmet chef, prepared a feast to which he invited an array of lay leaders. His kitchen routine was as perfected as any ritual. One might sit in the kitchen, observing, but you entered the culinary action only if asked. Kenny served each guest, personally. A bowl of soup. A portion of salmon. A gift for you from him, for Christ in you. I was reminded of some wonderful convents with ancient ways (in Britain and Israel, for example) where the prioress brings food to each one, a service to the guests who are Christ-bearers. Whether in the convent or in a bishop's house, it is a deeply moving custom.

During the diocesan convention, my husband and I were queried: Are you staying with the bishop? Do you have a bed? Sheets? Towels? (Yes to all.) You're lucky, our questioners laughed.

The bishop himself slept on the floor, albeit with a mattress. He lived simply: very little meat, no alcohol, no tobacco, daily runs along Juneau's scenic pathways. Icons throughout his home were a constant invitation to prayer. The door to the residence was always open, literally. We noticed how life flowed on, whether or not he was present. People left books in his living room; he left notes and books for them.

A lover of the arts, Kenny served on the board of one of Juneau's theater companies. Each summer he did some serious theater-going, usually at one of this country's Shakespeare centers; occasionally in England. His deepened sense of drama informed his celebration of liturgy. One of his final dramatic gestures—a month before his death—was to open the crypt located at the Shrine of Saint Thérèse where the first bishop of Juneau, Joseph Crimont, is buried. He knelt for a while and prayed for his predecessor, and then announced merrily that he would be buried there as well.

A member of Pax Christi, Kenny held positions on peace and war that were consistent and unwavering, but he always focused on the welfare of real men and women. He opposed the Persian Gulf War, but traveled to Iraq to escort Americans to safety.

And then there were his nieces and nephews. Now young men and women, he devoted some time each year to them, traveling to the cathedrals of Europe and camping out, or visiting the museums of America. He listened to them, guided them, learned from them, loved them.

Every once in a while a person appears as the very embodiment of the abundant life of which Jesus spoke (John 10:10): with a passion for justice and beauty; committed to simplicity and honesty; a direct but gentle person. Someone who is at home with laughter, at peace with himself, and who cultivates the ground of peace for others.

Sometimes that person is a bishop.

DOLORES R. LECKEY

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DEMOCRACY'S FUTURE

PARTIES THAT NOBODY GOES TO

Politics in America today is more paradoxical than any politics ought to be. On the one hand, the two major parties are as feeble as they have ever been. Party loyalty is tenuous, party organization weak, party bosses nonexistent. At the same time, old Washington hands assure us they have never seen the fever of partisanship running quite so high a temperature as it has in the past few years, a temp soaring even higher in the era of Speaker Gingrich.

How can these apparently contradictory phenomena be reconciled? How can we have near-anarchy plus organized warfare at the same time?

A clue to the answer may be found in the history of the Catholic church. The church has always had to worry about three kinds of constituents: (1) the average religious person, (2) the potential apathetic, and (3) the potential fanatic.

1. The average religious person is no problem. He or she avoids most gross immoralities, attends Sunday Mass regularly, marries in the church, has the kids baptized and confirmed, shows respect for the clergy, contributes money, is proud to be Catholic, etc. Very understandably, the clergy find it easy to work with this type, and they wish all Catholics could be like this. In fact, most clergy themselves belong to this category.

2. The potential apathetic is a lot of trouble. Much hard pulling on the part of others is required to keep this kind inside the Catholic fold. This category includes Catholics who are criminals, who are unreformed drunks, who married outside the church, who don't work at raising their kids Catholic, who rarely or never attend Mass, who dislike priests in general because of some unpleasant experience with a particular priest, etc. The most the church realistically hopes for with these people is to maintain them at some minimal level of religion, well below the level of the average Catholic.

3. Potential fanatics are the most trouble of all, far more trouble than the apathetic, who will go away when you ignore them. Potential fanatics, by contrast, refuse to go away. Their passion for religion is so great that they find it difficult to tolerate average Catholicism or the average Catholics who practice it, much as the Bach fanatic finds it difficult to abide the lover of sentimental music. Like the potential apathetic, this type also tends to dislike priests, though here the complaint is not about the badness of priests but about their goodness: a goodness that is too tame, too banal, too mediocre, lacking the bite and savor of real sanctity. The church has an ancient history of putting these people in rigorous and challenging institutional settings (convents and monasteries), hoping this will tame them while converting their vast energies to useful purposes. (During the age of persecution, a tempting alternative was to burn them at the stake.)

In its policy toward these three types lies one of the great secrets of the church's longevity. Religions that try to raise everyone to the level of fanaticism burn out within a few generations, while religions that tolerate apathy wither away.

Back to Washington politics.

American political parties have been similar to the Catholic church, in that they have aimed at fostering a moderate degree of intensity, in this case political intensity. They sustained mild political commitment and interest among average Americans; they tried to raise the potentially apathetic to the level of minimal political participation; and they attempted to tame potential fanatics.

But the parties are in decline. Over the last thirty years or so, Americans have become progressively more independent, less committed to either party. This political independence, it may be noted in passing, is part and parcel of a broader cultural trend toward individual autonomy. Our "do-your-own-thing" ethic has produced high rates of fornication, divorce, abortion, violence, yuppie shopping sprees, and entrepreneurial initiative, plus political independence. If we are prochoice in everything else, why shouldn't we be prochoice in politics?

So what will happen as the Democratic and Republican parties continue to fade away like the Cheshire Cat? The answer is easy. Since there will be no one uplifting the potential apathetics and taming the potential fanatics, apathy and fanaticism will abound. And that is precisely what has been happening in recent years. As political parties wane, fanatics and apathetics fill the void.

You could not easily be a fanatic inside the Democratic or Republican parties of the old days. Fanatics are single-issue people, while political parties are multi-issue organizations. But special interest groups—whether these are of the ideological type (for example, the National Rifle Association, the National Organization for Women, the National Right to Life Committee) or of the economic type (for example, the National Education Association, the National Federation of Independent Businesses, the American Medical Association)—are made to order for the single-issue mentality. As the parties have grown weaker, as they have lost their once-vast bases of loyal voters, their men and women in Washington have come increasingly under the sway of single-issue groups and the fanatics and semi-fanatics who populate them.

But if politicians are to get elected, it is not enough to cater to special interests. On election day, they must appeal to "independent" (that is, apathetic) voters. But how do you appeal to people whose party loyalty is close to zero and whose political knowledge and interest are not much higher? You do something sensational to catch their limited attention; for only sensationalism can get the attention of the apathetic. You run TV ads attacking your opponent as a person of bad character: liar, hypocrite, thief, womanizer, racist, anti-Semite, hater of widows and orphans, etc. While you're doing this you put an amazingly unflattering picture

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of your foe on the TV screen, an image presenting him or her as either a villain or an imbecile or (better still) both.

We Americans are embarked on a great and dangerous experiment to see if we can operate a modern democracy without strong political parties. There is no reason to believe this experiment will succeed, since strong political parties seem to be essential ingredients in a democracy. If the experiment continues, if fanaticism and apathy continue to be given free rein, American democracy will be in real danger.

Come to think of it, it is already in real danger. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

CYBER CAMPUS?

CLASSROOMS OF THE FUTURE

One of the arguments raging in Washington these days is over whether or how much federal money should be spent on aid for college students. The government has been providing such aid for over thirty years. There has been bipartisan agreement that the programs providing such aid are an investment in the civic and economic future of the country: witness the names attached to various grants—Pell, Stafford, Javits, Ford.

Right now it is estimated that federal programs help support 40 percent of the students in institutions of higher education. The Clinton administration advocates funding perhaps twice as many via tax deductions. On the other hand, the new Republican majority in Congress and budget-balancers among the Democrats favor cutting the existing programs.

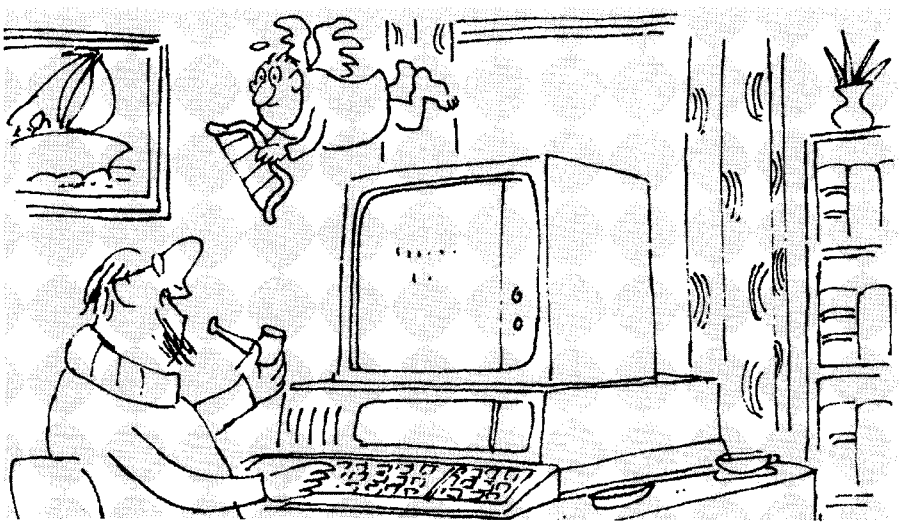
Most of us when we think of college think of a four-year experience in general education on a self-contained campus—an experience that forms manner and character as well as cultivating the mind. We imagine the distinguished faculty merging with eager students who leave the campus after four years prepared for the professions or a business career.

But that kind of higher education is pretty much a thing of the past. Universities and colleges now have students of all ages and their college careers may range over as much as seven or eight years with intervals of work. The extent of the change is epitomized, I think, by the University of Phoenix, which is now the country's twelfth largest private institution with over 18,000 students, larger than Stanford or Notre Dame. Phoenix is primarily a business school. It was founded in 1976, was accredited in 1980 by the North Central Association, and has awarded 60,000 degrees in its eighteen-year history. Phoenix is a far cry from its ancestor—the small local business college where students learned secretarial and accounting skills. It is an equally far cry from the business schools at liberal arts universities.

Phoenix students have little opportunity to bond outside the classroom. There are no dormitories, no fraternities, sororities, or student organizations and publications—not even a library. There is no traditional campus. Classes meet in leased spaces in office buildings, on military bases—even in motels. Few of the professors are distinguished academics with big reputations in their field, but they all hold graduate degrees and are working professionals in the field in which they teach. None is tenured. The faculty work on contract and are paid by the course.

Phoenix is aimed primarily at older, working students and, from the beginning, has given credit for life experiences in place of the prerequisite courses required elsewhere. Its founder, Dr. John Sperling, certainly foresaw the future. At the time he founded Phoenix, adults accounted for only 27 percent of student enrollment. Today they make up 45 percent. In addition to the MBA, the university has undergraduate programs in nursing, education, computer-information systems, and counseling. Most interesting of all—and most controversial—is its on-line program based in San Francisco. This program currently has 1,000 students. On-line students meet at all times, day and night, in cyberspace. Their average age is thirty-eight. Most of them never see their professors and will meet each other for the first time only at their graduation.

The on-line program is undoubtedly the most serious challenge to conventional academia. Such programs are already being introduced at traditional universities. As yet they are, as at Phoenix, adjuncts to the regular courses. But the question arises: if everybody is on-line do you need to attend a college or university to do scholarly re-



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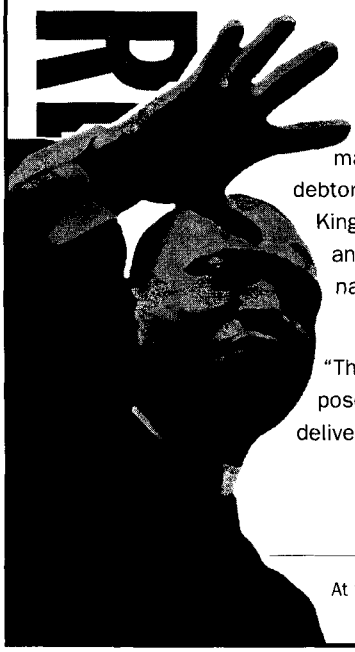

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search and inquiry or to take courses? And is the education gained by solitary scholars, solitary students, and solitary teachers sitting before their computers the education needed to qualify for the above-mentioned investment in the civic and economic future of the nation?

The provost of the University of Pennsylvania, Stanley Chodorow, has his doubts, as did many of the eighty university scholars who attended a conference at Penn in January on the potential effect of the new information technology on institutions of higher learning. The entire structure and focus of these institutions may be undermined by electronic technology. "It threatens to blow away our traditional definition of courses, class, students," said Chodorow. "What happens to the academic republic?" He pointed out that libraries have lost control of information; the line between student and nonstudent is blurred; authority rests no longer in the faculty, but in the flow of information.

Nevertheless, he is hopeful. "The university has adapted to change over eight centuries," and there are functions of the university that cannot be duplicated by technology. The university's role as "producer of new ideas" is more important than ever in an age of new economic, social, and political challenges.

Academia's role in teaching and training youth and the need for "face-to-face interaction among craftsmen of the guild" also are important. "The electronic environment may enhance, but it cannot replace the intellectual society of the university. We humans cannot thrive in bottomless, faceless environments. So long as society is healthy enough to need new knowledge and educated citizens, there will be a role for the university."

Let us hope he is right. Human beings are not simply vessels of information. They are social beings who need cooperation and interaction with others to develop full personalities. They need the transmission of knowledge and culture from those who have integrated it to those who would absorb it—transmission from teacher to student. A nation which needs fully educated persons to contribute to its future must see that technology remains the tool of its institutions, not their unworthy substitute. □

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NUMBERS DON'T LIE

A PRIESTHOOD IN IRREVERSIBLE DECLINE

RICHARD A. SCHOENHERR

In *Going My Way*, Bing Crosby is *Father* O'Malley to parishioners and friends, and to three generations of movie viewers. In the United States, believers and nonbelievers alike use "Father" to identify a Catholic priest. If Bing were addressed as *Reverend* O'Malley, well-socialized Catholics would twinge at the unfamiliar sound. Calling a Catholic priest father and calling other Christian ministers reverend or pastor is a taken-for-granted distinction in many Western countries. Similarly, most of the world knows Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II. As head and high priest of Roman Catholicism, he is familiarly called *il papa*, the pope, that is, simply, the *father*.

Thus, whether referring to parish priest or supreme pontiff, the same title signifying hegemonic control, patriarchal respect, and filial affection is used worldwide, and has been for centuries. It is time for Catholics and society-at-large to say good-by to father. Not, I insist, good-by to the sacerdotal sacramental ministry but to what "father" has come to symbolize: male celibate exclusivity.

The demographic facts leave little room for doubt. The imbalance in supply and demand for priests in the Catholic church can only grow more pronounced in the decades ahead. Ordinations to the diocesan priesthood fell by half during the decades following Vatican II, dropping from about 1,000 per year in the late 1960s to approximately 500 per year throughout the 1980s. From 1990 to 1993, the annual number of ordinations averaged 603, a 20 percent increase over the previous decade. This rise could be interpreted as the beginning of an upward trend, but that is unlikely because seminary statistics point in the opposite direction.

The number of Catholic seminarians in U.S. theologates (the final years of study before ordination) has steadily decreased, and the bottom of the descent is not yet in sight. Enrollments in theologates dropped 59 percent in less than three decades, from 8,325 in 1966 to 3,416 in 1993. Between 1990 and 1993 alone, the size of this group fell by more than 5 percent. The trend in the number of ordinations cannot go up as long as seminary enrollments continue so relentlessly downward. Thus, the recent increases in ordinations are only minor fluctuations in the downward trend.

Poor retention after ordination deepens the severe losses inflicted by plummeting ordinations. Chronic defection of young priests from the active ministry has likewise persisted since the end of the council. From 1968-74, the retention problem reached catastrophic proportions: The number of newly ordained priests needed to fill vacancies created by resignations averaged 73 percent annually, peaking at 95 percent in the early '70s. Later in that decade and throughout the 1980s, that dropped to 38 percent. Hence, although the retention problem has been cut almost in half, it continues to be severe. Nowadays four out of ten newly ordained priests are needed just to take over the ministries abandoned by those who resign; the other six ordinands cannot begin to fill the vacan-

"Well, basically I'm taking a wait-and-see attitude."

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cies created by the retirements and deaths of older priests.

In the last years of the 1990s and the early years of the twenty-first century, the Catholic priesthood will undergo a second mass exodus. This time, however, priests will be leaving because of natural attrition. Retirement and preretirement death are the inevitable result of the rapid aging of the priestly work force. Between 1966 and 2005, the median age of priests will have increased eight years. As the large cohorts ordained during the 1950s and 1960s reach the end of their careers, natural attrition rates will begin to soar and the already limited supply of active priests will precipitously dwindle.

Another component of the clergy shortage is the increased demand for priestly services produced by continuing growth in church membership. Catholic church membership will burgeon from roughly 45 million in 1965 to 74 million in 2005. High fertility rates of Catholic families and the steady immigration of Asian and Hispanic Catholics account for most of the growth. To a great degree, these demographic forces are impervious to social engineering, so membership growth cannot be slowed down even if anyone wanted to do it.

The stark facts are that, while the diocesan priesthood population will have declined by 40 percent between 1966 and 2005, the lay population is increasing by 65 percent. The laity-to-priest ratio, a fairly accurate measure of supply and demand, will double between 1975 and 2005 from 1,100 to 2,200 Catholics per active priest. Furthermore, this is a conservative estimate because it does not account for the growing Hispanic-American population, which is increasing five times faster than the general population. At the same time, recruitment and retention will remain chronic problems and the number of retirements and deaths will soar.

Here are the numbers to watch during this decade and the next. Barring change in the celibacy requirement, the total number of ordinations nationwide to the diocesan priesthood is likely to bottom out at a point between 500 and 600 per year. Net incardinations (the excess of in-migrations of priests over out-migrations) will probably hover around 100 per year. Resignations would fluctuate between 125 and 150 per year. Natural attrition during this period would average about 800 losses annually, approximately 500 from retirement and 300 from preretirement deaths. Thus, entrances to the diocesan priesthood would add up roughly to about 650 and exits to approximately 950 per year, for a net loss to the active clergy population of 300 diocesan priests annually.

The bottom line, therefore, shows about 21,000 active diocesan priests in 2005, or 40 percent fewer than the 35,000 registered in 1966. This priestly cadre, diminished not only in size but in youthful vigor, will be burdened with overwork, trying to meet the sacramental and other religious demands of more than 74 million U.S. Catholics.

So far, I am arguing that demographic forces are like a loaded tanker in the open sea. Once momentum is gained, it takes a long time for a heavy ship to slow down and turn around. So even if a successful program to improve recruitment and retention of priests is found, it would take several decades to decelerate the downward trend and turn it around.

Several decades, however, is a relatively short time for an organization like the Catholic church, which measures its age in centuries rather than decades. Thus, many church leaders, are content to take a wait-and-see attitude. In the meantime, some dioceses are improving their recruitment techniques and launching prayer campaigns to increase vocations to the priesthood. Others are urging deeper spiritual programs for priests and seminarians and calling for renewed support and encouragement from the laity to foster retention of young priests who are at risk of leaving the active ministry.

This approach assumes that the challenge facing the Catholic church is to change the environment, not adapt to it. If the environment no longer yields enough committed male celibates to staff its growing parishes, then the church must mount an effort to make the environment more supportive of male celibate exclusivity.

Will this strategy work? Not as long as the church itself and society-at-large spend their best efforts in exactly the opposite direction. The current demographic trends in the priesthood are propelled by a deep-seated dissatisfaction with mandatory celibacy. Study after study over the last three decades has concluded that poor recruitment and retention of priests is caused, in great measure, by problems with mandatory celibacy.

For example, every survey on record reports that the majority of priests are in favor of allowing the ordination of married men. Furthermore, the same polls show that one out of every three or four young priests says that he would like to get married if the policy were to allow it. Research by Potvin, Fee, Hemrick, Hoge, and their colleagues demonstrates that many young men are not entering the seminary because of the celibacy requirement. Further, most seminarians do not persevere to ordination for the same reason. Likewise, Schoenherr, Greeley, Perez Vilarino, and Verdieck and colleagues show that many young priests resign soon after ordination mainly because of the desire to marry. The celibacy requirement is keeping young men who want to from entering the priesthood and driving out many of those who do get ordained.

My review of these and other investigations concludes that low levels of ordination and moderate levels of resignations will continue for the foreseeable future because of: (1) the large proportion of psychologically underdeveloped and still-developing priests among the U.S. clergy; (2) the pervasive influence of the wider culture's sexual norms; (3) the growing uneasiness about claims to the spiritually superior value of celibacy over marriage within Catholic theological and priestly circles; (4) the large minority of priests who would prefer to be married; and (5) the unavoidable challenge facing every young heterosexual and homosexual priest to make the crisis of intimacy and mutuality a passage for growth rather than regression. The problem is not just celibacy; it is the powerful matrix of social forces that are propelling the number of those willing to be and remain priests in its downward

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trajectory. The full weight of history and social change is turning against male celibate exclusivity in the Catholic priesthood.

Society as a whole, and the Catholic church along with it, is experiencing an axial epoch. As the trends come to bear on the church, they are producing a unique balance of countervailing pressures for change. In this era of societal transformation, the Catholic church is trying to adapt its structures to incorporate a better balance between dogmatism and pluralism, between centrism and localism; between male domination and female equality, between personalism and transpersonalism; between clericism and laicism, and between sacramental and biblical means of salvation.

Whether all the players recognize it or not, celibacy has taken the lead role in the drama currently playing in the Catholic church. Why is this so? I see three main explanations: first, organizational change results when a charismatic coalition successfully resolves conflict over the *status quo*. Second, the material support for mandatory celibacy is waning in most Catholic dioceses. Third, ideological support for mandatory celibacy becomes more critical as material support for it wanes. So the theology of celibacy and marriage becomes a contested ideological terrain where conservative and progressive coalitions fight it out. Let me try to clarify these three areas.

● First, social change results when structural tension creates conflict over the *status quo* and a charismatic coalition resolves the conflict, moving an organization in the direction of its progressive values. Today, conflict in the church swirls around the hegemonic priesthood because it defines the *status quo*: Only ordained male celibates are given the expertise and authority to control the sacramental means of salvation, which are the core of Catholic ministry. What is the most likely resolution of the conflict buffeting the church?

Of the traits that make up the current form of Catholic ministry, two flow from the essence, or deep structure of religion, namely, hierarchic and sacramental hegemony. They will always be part of Catholic ministry. Others stem from historical and cultural circumstances, or the surface structures of religion, namely, male and celibate exclusivity.

While hierarchic control over the means of salvation will remain intact in the Catholic church, it will continue to be transformed by greater participation of the laity. In fact, this modification is well under way as a result of the lay movement, the liturgical movement, and reforms inaugurated by Vatican II. As the second millennium ends, sharing hierarchic control by priest and lay minister is possible because social trends affecting the Catholic church have struck a new balance between laity and clergy.

Despite lay participation, however, sacrificial worship requires a properly designated sacrificer. Thus, in keeping with the unique rights and responsibilities flowing from ordination, priests will still be called to preside over sacramental celebrations, principally the eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass. But even the rites that require a priest are no longer rigidly controlled by them. Lay people now help plan the liturgy, actively participate by reciting prayers, singing hymns, reading the Scripture passages, serving at the altar, even preaching homilies, and distributing Communion. Furthermore, all of these activities are open to both men and women. These practices, unheard of a few decades ago, have become routine in Catholic parishes. Moreover, they will persist because they fit the needs of an educated, pluralistic community moving away from its Eurocentric origins.

Following the rule of *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the order of worship determines the order of the believing community), if the ordained priesthood shares hierarchic control of worship with the priesthood of all believers, other transformations follow. Genuine participation in creating and controlling the order of worship demands greater participation in hierarchic coordination and control of the structure of the believing community. Decision-making power over the central hierophanic actions of worship will spill over into decision-making power in other hierarchical activities of the church. Note, however, that hierarchic power will continue, even though it has been adjusted in order to include participation of the laity.

● Second, the time for celibate exclusivity, however, has run out. Many of the economic and political conditions supporting mandatory celibacy are less salient now than in the past. In prior centuries, inheritance and landholding traditions in Catholic countries used to provide latent support for priestly celibacy. These customs directed that the first son inherit the family property, encouraging the second or third to enter the priesthood. Denied family property, which went to the eldest son, ambitious younger sons could satisfy their desire for power and wealth by acquiring a church benefice. Talented younger sons could satisfy their desire for higher education in the priesthood. Even homosexual sons could satisfy their desire for dignity and respect in the same way.

With the shift from agricultural to an industrial economy, most of the structural supports for mandatory celibacy crumbled in Europe. Further, they never held sway in countries like the United States that began with the Industrial Revolution and so never had a feudal tradition. Generally, the *need* for large families is gone and the widespread availability of effective birth control techniques makes the *choice* of small families possible. Additionally, the avenues of upward mobility for men are wider, the chances for power and wealth are greater, and the opportunities for creative talent are more plentiful now than in the past.

While structural supports in favor of mandatory celibacy are waning, structural pressures against it are growing. Obviously, society-at-large prefers marriage as the norm and supports the preference by being suspicious of those who choose not to enter wedlock. This is one of the most pervasive structural constraints working against celibate exclusivity. It affects all walks of life, including Catholic ministry.

In the final analysis, the most telling structural pressure against celibate exclusivity is the decline in the church's most critical economic resource, the priestly work force. The church, like any other modern bureaucracy, is organized

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around its technical core. Based on the theoretical and empirical arguments presented, it is obvious that the Catholic church cannot continue her far-flung operations without an ample supply of priests. It is just as obvious from the data that losses in the supply of celibate priests are approaching the crisis point. The only choice is to staunch the hemorrhaging supply or cut back key operations. The choice can be dramatized by asking whether the Catholic tradition of eucharistic worship should be sacrificed on the altar of mandatory celibacy. Conflict over which is the better strategy, keeping mandatory celibacy or keeping the Eucharist, is moving toward an intense ideological struggle.

● Third, as the material basis for mandatory celibacy declines, male exclusivity becomes an open political debate in the church. Ideological arguments are taking over as the major weapons in the battle. Whose ideology wins is the outcome of a sophisticated political contest. Most theories of social change emphasize the necessity of an open battle to win the hearts and minds of both elites and subordinates so they will support either the *status quo* or the proposed change.

The classic arguments about the political power of ideology are nicely summarized and applied by Rhys Williams and Jay Demerath ("Religion and Political Process in an American City," *American Sociological Review*, 56 [1991]). They note that all political issues go through a life cycle. First, the issue area must evolve; that is, it must be named and defined. What category the issue is put in is a political issue. The namers, definers, and categorizers become the owners of the issue.

For example, the pope encourages bishops to avoid public discussion of mandatory celibacy, thus keeping the issue area from evolving by being named and defined as a problem worthy of attention. The married priesthood may be defined as either a hierarchic/bureaucratic or as a hierophanic/pastoral issue. When it is discussed, therefore, the pope and his agents define the problem as a hierarchic/bureaucratic issue. They couch it in arcane theological language, calling celibacy a "most precious jewel," and authoritatively announce that the theological issues are closed and not in need of further study.

The conservative coalition maneuvers to downplay the practical pastoral implications of maintaining a celibate priesthood (for example, the bitter debate between bureaucrats and pastors in the 1971 Synod of Bishops, which was repeated on a smaller scale at the 1990 synod). The papal alliance practically ignores the pastoral issue by calling for administrative bureaucratic solutions which reproduce the *status quo*. They argue that the priest shortage is temporary: Better recruitment techniques, better support groups, better in-service training, better discipline and asceticism, etc., will solve the crisis. Bishops at the local level, however, define the priest shortage as a pastoral problem involving access to the sacraments, especially Mass. They give priority to immediate pastoral solutions. For example, Archbishop Rembert Weakland, Bishop Kenneth Untener, and others take a public stand against bureaucratic solutions supporting the *status quo*. They go on record that the wait-and-see strategy is not working: Not even the present generation of practicing Catholics should be deprived of the Mass because of the scarcity of celibate priests. If a celibate priest is unavailable to celebrate Mass, they propose the immediate and simple pastoral solution of ordaining qualified married men to the priesthood

In an ideological battle such as this, Williams and Demerath point out, definitions imply solutions. That is, defining a problem determines who has the authority or responsibility for addressing, deciding, and acting on the issue. Thus, to be granted the right to reduce the complexity of an issue to its essence is a hotly debated political process. If celibacy is really a pastoral issue, then it must be addressed immediately in those terms, for definitions imply solutions. If conservatives can keep attention off the pastoral implications of the celibacy problem, and define the issue in other terms, then the *status quo* of the hegemonic priesthood remains intact.

But the key point should not be lost. It is not *celibacy* that is at issue, but celibate *exclusivity*. Limiting the priesthood exclusively to celibates has become an anachronism. Celibacy as such has always been and will always continue to be a viable, respected path to transpersonal holiness *for those who are called*. A call to priesthood, however, can no longer be equated with a call to celibacy.

Differentiating the two has positive consequences for both the priesthood and authentic religion. For when an interior, personal, religious calling becomes mandatory as an entrance requirement for a position of power, the dilemma of mixed motivation clouds the picture.

Catholic priests of the future will continue to exercise sacerdotal and sacramental power. But many Catholics no longer need or want celibate exclusivity in the priesthood. To be authentically religious, Catholic ministry must open itself to the charismatic transformative power of marriage as well as celibacy. Most Catholics will have little trouble saying hello to married fathers in the priesthood. But once this is achieved, the issue will then become one of saying farewell to father-rule in general, and to welcoming gender equality in the priesthood and the church.

Male exclusivity is a long way from getting on the official reform agenda of the Roman Catholic church because the church has spent little effort developing a theology of gender equality. What passes for a Catholic theology of human sexuality is based on what many consider to be inaccurate or outdated philosophy, anthropology, biology, and history. Moreover, Catholic scholars who suggest new tenets that veer even moderately from Rome's traditional views on sexual morality and the related issue of gender equality have been harassed and marginalized.

Still, while the issue of mandatory celibacy now fills the reform spotlight, the more basic issue of male exclusivity strikes deeper at the root-malaise that threatens authentic religion in the Catholic church. Dropping celibate exclusivity is the necessary chink in the patriarchal wall surrounding Catholic male dominance. It is the crack that will eventually cause another section of the barrier against gender equality to crumble. □

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WHY PRIESTS CAN'T PREACH

IT'S ALL IN THE PREPARATION

DENNIS BURKE

The rugged priest with the chiseled Bogart face stared down at a hundred seminarians in the lecture hall. "Going to bed with a woman is not the greatest sin a priest can commit," he declared. Pin-drop silence. "The greatest sin a priest can commit is to get up in the pulpit on a Sunday unprepared to preach." The speaker was my brother, Eugene, preeminent preacher and Paulist theologian.

Some months ago, as I sat on the Archbishop's Pastoral Planning Commission in San Francisco, that scene from the 1950s came vividly to mind. A sociologist from the University of San Francisco was reporting that one of the lowest scores in a survey of 15,000 Catholics in San Francisco was in response to the statement: "[The priest] makes the gospel real through homilies that apply to our lives." I empathize with priests today. They are overworked and often demoralized, and the thinning of their ranks will not make things easier. By the year 2000, one-third of the priests in the Archdiocese of San Francisco will have retired or died. Only a handful of new priests will be ordained in the interim. One possible solution, importing priests from abroad, does not bode well for preaching, as many such priests speak with accents that are virtually incomprehensible from the pulpit. A recent survey of priests conducted by Dean Hoge of The Catholic University found that "self-esteem" was their number-one concern. Yet according to Father Frank McNulty of Newark, the self-esteem problem of priests is linked to good preaching: "It seems to me that better preachers get more affirmation," he told the *National Catholic Reporter*, "and that increases self-esteem."

They do and it does.

The archbishop of San Francisco, John Quinn, is an excellent, albeit formal, preacher. Five years ago he required priests in the archdiocese to take remedial courses in homiletics. Yet, as my wife and I found out by visiting various parishes in the inner city Sunday after Sunday, a lot remains to be done. Having listened to sermons in Buenos Aires, Caracas, Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco during the last year, I am convinced that the high percentage of mediocre homilies is not just a San Francisco problem. It is a worldwide Catholic problem, and—in an age of mushrooming disbelief—a serious one.

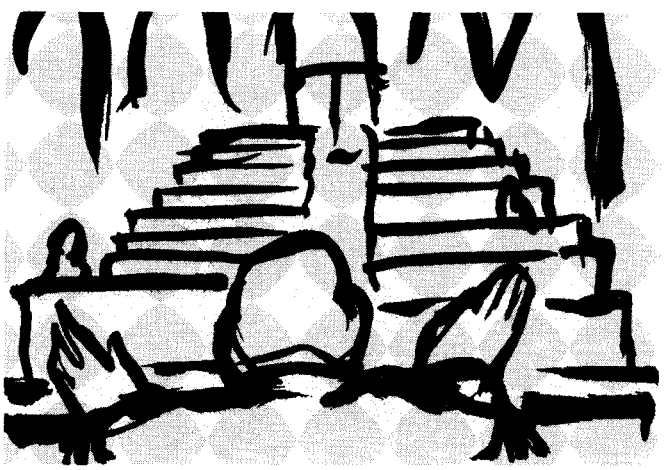
DENNIS BURKE *lives in Ross, California. He is completing a novel.*

Why can't priests preach? Part of the problem is the Catholic notion of priesthood. Compare it to the Protestant concept of minister. A Catholic becomes a priest to say Mass; a Protestant becomes a minister to preach the gospel. A priest is ordained to provide the Eucharist for the faith community within certain territorial boundaries; a minister is sent to build a Christian community—often afresh—by witnessing to the Word. The result of this theological difference is that typically a priest sees preaching as a secondary aspect of his vocation.

But there is a deeper problem. The great preacher must have the heart of a missionary: the burning desire to ride the shoulders of grace as it spins and turns the souls of the hearers to Christ. Preaching is inseparable from the notion of conversion. Yet, as one older priest told me, in the seminary the primary emphasis was on pastoral ministry rather than conversion of the world: "We were taught to be maintenance men."

In the early stages of the Pastoral Planning Commission, it was the laity—not the priests—who felt the archdiocesan plan should emphasize the evangelization of San Francisco. The priests, though obviously zealous, seemed absorbed—overwhelmed even—with their other ministries within the church.

Still, *why can't priests preach?* I believe that with evangelization playing second fiddle to other tasks, they simply don't prepare. They put a few thoughts on the back of an envelope and "wing it." A priest I know told me that a conscientious young priest confided in him that he worked really hard at preparing his sermons. The older priest, who had a reputation as a preacher, inquired: "How long do you spend preparing?"



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"A couple of hours."

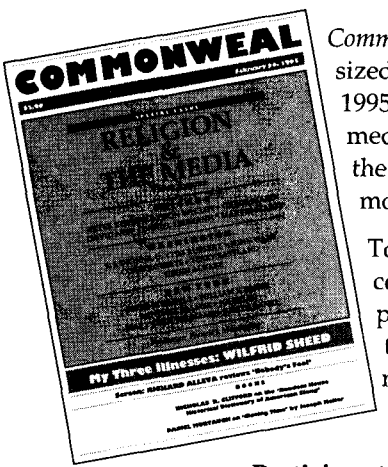
"That's good," the older priest said with only mild enthusiasm.

"How long do you spend?" the younger priest asked.

"Well, I start reading a book on Monday. I think about my homily every spare moment, make notes. Then on Saturday night I spend five or six hours writing it out word for word." The young priest looked shocked.

Every person in a congregation knows intuitively when the priest-preacher has not prepared, for the preacher fails to communicate that *this time is sacred, for I desire to share with you what has set me on fire*. Doing his impromptu thing, he cannot hear the teeth gnashing or the minds clicking off.

Religion & the Media



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What does it mean to prepare? It means the priest must read: the Scriptures, above all, but theology, history, biography, good fiction, journals, magazines, or newspapers. All are grist for sermons. Recently, a seasoned pastor told me: "The new priests are part of the television generation. They watch TV four hours a day." If this is true, it is terrifying. A preacher who does not read is not thinking; not thinking, he lacks ideas; and lacking ideas—convictions. The laity want their preacher to speak from a heart that is full and a mind that is alive, for only then—short of a miracle—will the word of God pierce to their innermost soul.

Furthermore, there must be an explicitly spiritual component to the preparation. It is a special kind of spirituality and a special kind of prayer that links the priest to the Spirit of Christ who was sent to bear witness to the Father's love for every person. He wept over Jerusalem; he was moved with pity at the sight of the sick and the crippled, the blind and the deaf; he yearned that all "might be one even as the Father and I are one." The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of a missionary, *one sent* to the people "groaning for redemption."

Two years ago, at the University of Southern California Newman Center in Los Angeles, I caught that spirit as I rarely have. Father Marty Jenco, the Servite priest kidnapped and imprisoned in Beirut for so many months, was preaching (or was it meditating?) on Jeremiah. Reading his carefully written talk word for word like John Henry Newman, in a fervid, urgent voice, Jenco's eyes and face glistened with conviction. I was caught up in his spirit. Mesmerized. For I knew I was listening to a prophet, a man of prayer, a man who had seen the Burning Bush and yearned for the source of that fire.

At one time there was a great hope that the renewal of Catholic biblical scholarship would enhance preaching. And it has, in many ways. But, often as not, it has also meant that the cut-and-dried answers of the catechism have been replaced by a dreary fundamentalism: a mindless rehash or a slavish exegesis of the text just read. A biblically based homily requires every bit as much imagination and surprise as any other. A dull homily is a dull speech. And in my experience, dullness on the part of the priest drives people from the church.

The Bible is the purest, richest source of God's word. It is the book on which the church meditates, the well from which it drinks. But it is not the only source. God speaks to us in a thousand ways: through a troubled son or daughter; a person in a soup line; a new baby; a newspaper story; an earthquake; a novel like Ron Hansen's *Mariette in Ecstasy*; or a TV show like "NYPD Blue." Christ used the sights around him: farmers in the field, birds in the air. He helped people see the word of God in everything in their lives. A priest should do no less.

But let's say the priest lacks the time to prepare (which I don't believe—people always find time for what they deem is important), why not have the priests in a parish take turns preaching at all the Sunday Masses? Why not have designated preachers? Ordination does not necessarily include the charism of preach-

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ing. I know the integrity of the liturgy calls for the celebrant to give the homily. But what if, in fact, the priest does not faithfully prepare, or cannot be understood, or somehow has an *anti*-charism? There is a higher principle in sacramental theology than the integrity of the liturgy and that is *sacramenta propter homines*: sacraments are for the people. If the faithful are giving up the sacrament because of poor preaching, the integrity of the liturgy becomes a dispensable liturgical ideal.

All the courses in the world—be they Scripture or homiletics—cannot make a man an excellent preacher. The only thing that can is a sense of urgency that preaching is the highest priority, that "Faith comes through hearing," and "how can they hear without a preacher?"

I encountered that sense of urgency last summer in the Castro, the gay district of San Francisco. My wife and I were assisting at Mass at Holy Redeemer with a church full of fine-looking men, most in their thirties and forties. From the back we could see their carefully trimmed hair and muscular shoulders, casual shirts and faded jeans. I couldn't remember the last time I had seen so many men at Mass. And when they sang out with male vigor, I thought of fighter pilots on the eve of a fateful mission, for there was an intensity about them: men conscious of their very mortality.

The priest was hardly prepossessing. Slender, balding, with glasses, he had a thin voice that at first was hard to pick up as he half-read from his notes. But by the second sentence of the homily the church was perfectly still, for the priest had prepared.

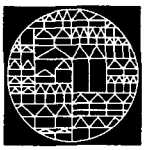
This is the kernel of what he said: "A man had a vineyard in the Napa Valley that had just been attacked by fungus. So, he went to his son and said: 'Chablis, will you help me in the vineyard?' Chablis answered: 'Yes, of course.' But Chablis, distracted by friends, got in his red sports car, drove down to San Francisco and was never heard from again" [spontaneous laughter].

"The man then went to his other son. 'Zinfandel...'" [more laughter], "'will you help me in the vineyard?' Zinfandel replied: 'No, I'm busy.' But Zinfandel walked away, and had *second thoughts*." [Long pause.] "He returned and worked the vineyard."

"God is in our *second thoughts*," the frail priest explained. "Not in the temptations that draw us or the impulses that propel us to what is wrong. No, God is in those brief moments before we decide or act, those moments when we catch ourselves considering things; those moments we call...*second thoughts*. So, at the Safeway store as you look over the wine aisle this week, ask yourself: When the temptations swirl around me, will it be Chablis or...[long pause] Zinfandel?"

The stillness in the church said God's mighty word had struck home. After Mass, as I thanked the priest (which I always do when I hear a well-prepared sermon), I asked him how much time he had spent preparing. His face wrinkled with calculation and I noticed the men crossing the street for coffee next to the old convent, now a hospice for the dying. Then, he answered: "I thought about it all week, made notes every day, wrote it out word for word. I guess eight or nine hours."

I rest my case. □



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AN AMERICANIST HERO

JOHN ENGLAND: STILL AHEAD OF HIS TIME

LEONARD SWIDLER

Americanism is a heresy, so proclaimed by Pope Leo XIII in the 1899 papal letter *Testem benevolentiae*. It's an odd sort of heresy, in that no one was accused of holding the doctrines it condemned (for example, extolling natural over supernatural virtues, rejecting religious vows as incompatible with Christian liberty). Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, to whom *Testem* was addressed, denied in his reply that any educated American Catholics held the views described in the letter.

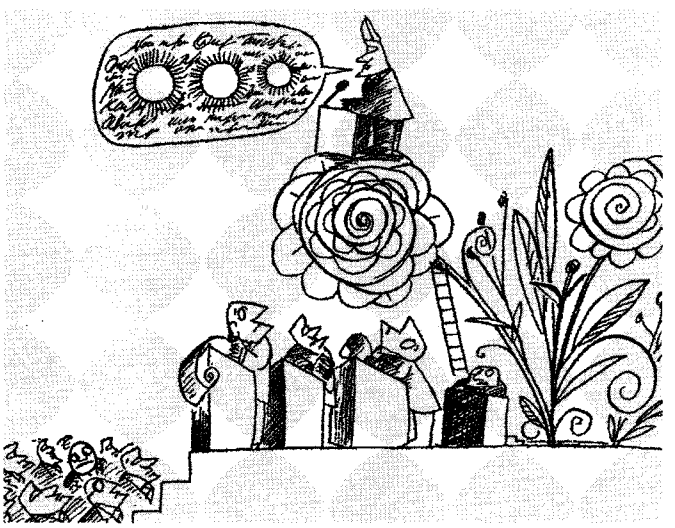
Testem benvolentiae provided a sop, more symbolic than substantial, to conservative clerics in Europe and the United States who harbored dire suspicions of developments in American Catholicism, seeing in them the influence of Protestantism and/or the French Revolution. The letter's only other accomplishment was to give a bad name to a good thing. Gibbons was indeed an "Americanist," as were others: Archbishops John Ireland, John J. Keane, Martin J. Spalding; all of them accepted, advocated, and even celebrated what they saw as the distinctive virtues of the American nation: religious liberty, democracy, openness, separation of church and state.

Though these late-nineteenth-century prelates have had few followers of equal stature, they did have predecessors. The very first "Americanizer" in the U.S. hierarchy was the new country's very first bishop, John Carroll (1735-1815). Born into a founding family of Maryland, the only English colony in the New World established by Catholics and the first to establish religious liberty, Carroll was Rome's choice to become the first bishop of the new country's first diocese. He urged, however, that all the priests of the nation should have a voice in choosing their bishop. Rome acceded, and Carroll became bishop of Baltimore. Government by consensus was a prime element in his legacy to the American church; another was his unqualified devotion to religious liberty.

Between Carroll's death in 1815 and the arrival of Gibbons, Ireland, & Co., there was only one other giant church leader in America: John England (1786-1842) of Cork, Ireland. At age thirty-four, having already been a cathedral lecturer, prison and asylum chaplain, teacher of philosophy and college president, England was pastor of a parish in a town near Cork when he learned in 1820 of his appointment as bishop of Charleston, South Carolina, a vast mission diocese comprised of North and South Carolina and Georgia.

Though he was not yet an American citizen when he assumed office, England showed an immediate appreciation for the values and institutions of American democracy, and their compatibility with Catholic tradition. Soon after his arrival, he wrote a pastoral letter to the faithful of his diocese, the first such letter in the history of the American church. And that was only one of his innovations. First, a brief scan of his policies:

- Again acting without precedent, England composed a constitution for the governance of his diocese, spelling out the rights and responsibilities of all parties: laity, clergy, and bishop, and then submitted it for acceptance to every priest and all the leading laymen of the parishes for voluntary adoption.
- Less than two years after his arrival, England established the first Catholic newspaper in America, the weekly *United States Catholic Miscellany*—and he himself edited the paper, helped in the printing, and wrote most of the copy; writings of his collected from the paper ran to seven volumes. John Tracy Ellis wrote that the *Miscellany* was England's "greatest single contribution" to the American Catholic church and that "it exerted a powerful influence on American Catholic thought during the early nineteenth century."
- In 1826, a month before receiving his final citizenship papers, England became the first Catholic clergyman to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress; President John Quincy



LEONARD SWIDLER *is editor of the* Journal of Ecumenical Studies *and professor of Catholic thought and interreligious dialogue in the religion department of Temple University.*

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Adams and the justices of the Supreme Court were also present.

● Though his was a mission diocese with relatively few Catholics, England is generally credited as the chief force behind the holding of the first four American Provincial Councils, beginning in 1829, which resolved many pressing problems of the growing American church in effective collegial fashion. England had serious difficulties with others in the American hierarchy, but the records indicate that he dominated these meetings, and he was chosen to write the pastoral letters they issued.

● In his relations with non-Catholics, England anticipated attitudes that achieved full expression nearly a century-and-a-half later, in the Second Vatican Council. He spoke often and kindly of "our separated brethren," among whom he had many friends. Of the 207 public discourses of one kind or another recorded in his diary between January 1, 1821 and December 5, 1823, most were delivered in Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopal churches and houses. He reported that Protestants had often offered the use of their churches for Catholic services, and even contributed funds for his churches and other projects: the ultimate proof of ecumenical good will!

● At a time when a translation of the Missal into German was condemned in Rome and placed on the Index, and decades before Leo XIII lifted the official prohibition on vernacular translations, England succeeded in publishing an English-language Missal (his own work) in 1822; it also included a 120-page history and explanation of the Mass ritual. It was another American first.

In many ways, then, John England was far ahead of his times in his pastoral career in America. (Not in all ways, it must be added; in 1814 he published a defense of slavery as an institution.) In one respect—the constitution he offered to the faithful of his Charleston diocese—England was not only ahead of his time but is still without worthy successors. Under the constitution, each congregation elected representatives who were to constitute a vestry, which had real powers and responsibilities: "The churches, cemeteries, lands, houses, funds, or other property belonging to any particular district [here meaning parish] shall be made the property of the vestry of that district, in trust for the same." All money belonging to the parish could be "expended only by authority of an act of the vestry of that district."

Another element of the constitution provided for annual diocesan conventions of all the clergy and a proportional representation of the laity from each congregation, elected by all the people. The convention had certain powers parallel to those of the vestry. The bishop was required to make a full report to the convention on the expending of all funds, and England fulfilled this duty in detail every year. In addition, he took the opportunity to present an overview of the state of the church in the whole country as well as in his own diocese, so that his twenty-six convention addresses give a history of the church in America for those years.

It is important to note that in 1823, when England proposed his constitution, a portion of the American church was involved in a struggle over trusteeism, a movement with roots in Catholic Europe that under some state laws in America was at times transformed into a threat to hierarchical control and church unity. These laws more or less presumed lay administration of church property, including the right of "patronage," that is, choice of pastors and other church officials. Undirected, trusteeism could have developed into a Catholic form of congregationalism, so that it is understandable that England's constitution met with a cold response from most of his fellow bishops. (Another factor, according to Andrew Greeley, was that many of these bishops lacked competence to grasp England's vision.) Today England's diocesan constitution is recognized as an ingenious way of recognizing but creatively channeling the democratic impulse that lay at the foundation of trusteeism.

For example, despite the broad powers given to the vestry and the convention, the constitution required the approval of the bishop for the sale of any property, a means of incorporating the American notions of checks and balances and separation of powers, as well as election of representatives, into church administration. "The American people," England said in a letter to Rome, "are a law-abiding people, and the laws are respected so long as the voice of the people is heard in their making." Elsewhere he reported that the American Catholic "will never be reconciled to the practice of the bishops, and oftentimes of the priest alone, giving orders without assigning reasons for the same." He told his 1827 annual convention that he was searching for and training clergy who were "attached to our republican institutions."

The constitution also reflected his grasp of certain Catholic traditions that are always in danger of neglect. At its very beginning, England wrote that he sees the bishop "not as the deputy of the pope, but as a successor to the Apostles." Without using the term subsidiarity, he operated by that principle in sending the constitution to Rome; he told his convention: "I could not look for its approbation, because the power of making the regulations which it enacts, resides within each diocese for itself, subject only to the examination of the Apostolic See, to prevent their containing anything incompatible with our holy faith."

On another theme, separation of church and state, England was almost an absolutist, seeing in the American system the best protection for both religious liberty and civic freedom. The motto at the top of every issue of his *United States Catholic Miscellany* was taken from the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." In his two-hour-long address to Congress in 1826, he proclaimed: "I would not allow to the pope, or to any bishop of our church, outside this Union, the smallest interference with the humblest vote at our most insignificant balloting box. He has no right to such interference." In other passages, England explained further:

> You must, from the view which I have taken, see the plain distinction between spiritual authority and a right to interfere in the regulations of human governments or civil concerns. You have in your Constitution wisely kept

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them distinct and separate. It will be wisdom, and prudence, and safety to continue that separation....You have no power to interfere with my religious rights; the tribunal of the church has no power to interfere with my civil rights....Any idea of the Roman Catholics of these republics being in any way under the influence of any foreign ecclesiastical power, or indeed of any church authority in the exercise of their civil rights is a serious mistake. There is no class of our fellow-citizens more free to think and to act for themselves on the subject of our rights than we are; and I believe there is not any portion of the American family more jealous of foreign influence or more ready to resist it.

England's views of church governance were consistent with his support of religious liberty and church-state separation. He recognized that there could be disagreements with church authorities and legitimate dissent by faithful Catholics. In a letter to U.S. Secretary of State John Forsythe in 1841, he wrote that if the American bishops had found in a papal apostolic letter "anything contrary to their judgment, respecting faith or morals, it would have been their duty to have respectfully sent their statement of such differences to the Holy See, together with their reasons for such dissent."

If almost everything about England is surprising, possibly the most startling, given his views, is that in general he had very good relations with Rome. For example, his Missal, along with a lengthy explanation of the Vatican's Holy Week ceremonies—written in Rome at the Vatican's request—was published in English in a single 310-page volume, and then translated into French and Italian and published in all three languages at the expense of the then reigning pope, who was none other than Gregory XVI (1831-46), whose best-known encyclical, *Mirari vos*, vigorously condemned notions of religious liberty, separation of church and state, and freedom of speech and the press.

Part of the explanation may be that Gregory recognized a difference between the political liberalism of North America and the continental movements that he found threatening. But England's personality may also have played a part; there are indications that he charmed Gregory XVI while Gregory was still Cardinal Cappellari, prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (England did in fact charm many people with his innocent openness, wit, and articulateness). In 1830, five months before becoming pope, Cappellari sent England a letter of commendation: "Your letter gave me the greatest pleasure; for it contains a very clear proof of the remarkable care which your Lordship is giving to the religious problems of your diocese....I desire eagerly to confess to your Lordship that the Sacred Congregation has a high opinion of your intelligence, your piety, your learning, and your other admirable qualities."

In contrast, most of England's peers in the American hierarchy were bitterly critical of everything he did—his constitution, convention, the *Miscellany*, hobnobbing with Protestants. The reason, Andrew Greeley has written, was that England "was too much for them and they were too small for him....For John England committed the unpardonable crime—he was right...and such accuracy was intolerable in a man who had barely arrived on the shores of the new republic."

Though much of England's work seemed to die with him, his memory lives. His principal biographer, Peter Guilday, concluded that it will long be valued because of his "untrammeled Americanism, on account of his thorough grasp of American idealism, and above all because of the unique place he made for himself in American history by interpreting justly and accurately to his own epoch the harmony between Catholic principles and the constitutional bases of the American government." Again, Greeley: "American Catholicism had a splendid opportunity in John England and missed its chance. The opportunity would not return again for almost a half century." That opportunity did return with the arrival of the "Americanists" who were put under a shadow by *Testem benevolentiae*. From the vantage point of post-Vatican II Catholicism, it is clear that the Americanism of John Carroll, of Gibbons, Ireland, Keane, and Spalding, and, above all, of John England was not heresy but heroism. We need new Americanist heroes today. □

Stephen Stepanchev

The Church in the Desert

"This is where it hurts," I say. I point
To the belly, head, and heart of the figurine,
My surrogate. The God-bearer doesn't hear.

She knows a mere two thousand years can't cure
My ills. I die of the same diseases and griefs
As my ancestors. I have no immunity.

Sand whirls in the shadow of the little church
Wrung from a cactus patch and oblivion.
Light from a blue window shines in the mild eyes
Of the saint, but intercession is a dream.

Then, steady as the eye of the kingfisher,
I plunge into the dunking pool and wash
Away the gritty sand from my head and heart,
The terrible, troubling appetites of day.

Less comfortable in my disbelief,
I swim, resisting, as the sun retreats.

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ONE MOVIE, THREE PLOTS

'PRIEST'

Paradoxical is both the making and the matter of *Priest*, written by Jimmy McGovern and directed by Antonia Bird.

Almost every shot in this British movie shows us what must be seen at that particular moment of the story and puts us precisely in the right spot from which to view the action. And every sequence of shots has been assembled by editor Susan Spivey with a disdain for wasted motion that is downright athletic. Jimmy McGovern's dialogue is by turns pungent and poignant and always well-served by a cast dedicated to unfussy verism.

But—paradox one—though the filmmaking is precise, the storytelling is diffuse. In fact, there are three stories in this movie, and the best one is nearly buried by the others.

A young priest, Greg Pilkington, takes up his new post in a Liverpool working-class neighborhood and soon clashes with his fellow cleric, Father Thomas. Both men are compassionate and devoted to their parishioners, but Pilkington is a traditionalist who preaches in the pulpit of the need for rigorous self-scrutiny, while Thomas, apparently an exponent of liberation theology, roams the aisles during his sermons about forgiveness and social justice. Pilkington's disapproval of Thomas is both intensified and complicated by his discovery that his fellow priest is sleeping with the housekeeper. I was mentally rubbing my hands in anticipation of seeing just how the script was going to work out this clash of temperaments and morals when something curious happened. Plot two commenced. The traditionalist turns out to be homosexual.

From then on, the Pilkington-Thomas conflict is set aside. Thomas, with his easygoing and easily satisfied sensuality, becomes the voice of reason and compassion, indeed the very pattern of normality, as he counsels and defends the younger cleric, whose homosexuality brings him scandal and torment. Father Thomas wins over the movie, so to speak, without having to win us over to his moral position, and actor Tom Wilkinson's charm and assured masculinity clinch the victory. Father Pilkington's real fight is not with Thomas but against his own sexual nature, a dramatically problematic struggle since it doesn't advance towards a climax but instead seesaws. He yields to desire, repents, yields, repents, yields....But not to worry. Soon, plot number three is underway, and this turns out to be the most interesting element in the movie.

In the confessional, a girl of fourteen tells Pilkington that she has been forced by her father into incest. Naturally, the priest tries to get the girl to turn to her mother or teachers for help, but the child, her spirit stifled, refuses. How is the priest going to save the girl without violating sacramental secrecy? And a larger question is broached: How can this secrecy be good when it allows evil to thrive? Comparisons to Hitchcock's *I Confess* will be made, but that fairly powerful film was somewhat compromised by conventional plot developments. By contrast, McGovern and director Bird cut to the core of the situation and give us something truly piteous and disturbing. This strand of *Priest* is riveting and, if extricated from the rest of the movie, would be one of the best half-hours ever committed to film.

But the very fact that a part of it could be extracted and remain coherent shows what is wrong with *Priest*. Even if Pilkington's sexual problems didn't exist, his torment over the child's abuse certainly would. Father Greg isn't in a quandary because he is both gay and manacled to a terrible secret, but because he's a priest and bound by the church's rules. In regard to the girl's suffering, the homosexual problem is beside the point. Would a heterosexual priest's conscience be less exercised? But it's the sign of a truly successful drama that nothing is beside the point. McGovern and Bird are like talented short-story writers trying to create a novel by jamming separate tales together.

But there's still another problem with this movie. And another paradox.

The filmmakers' compassion for Pilkington is, beyond question, sincere. But their incredulity at the rigors of his calling is also evident. Those who take those rigors seriously are shown to be incapable of happiness and/or goodness. Consider: there are five priests in this story. One is sleeping with a man and hates himself for it; another is sleeping with a woman and has gotten over hating himself for it; a third, elderly, has been celibate all his life and therefore feels that his life has been wasted; another is a provincial Savanarola, full of self-righteously expressed bile; presiding over all is a bishop who is nothing but a smarmy bureaucrat. This lugubrious roll call may have been assembled by McGovern solely in order to show what the hero is up against, but its effect is to stack the dramatic deck. Though the conclusion of *Priest* leaves its hero still taking his vows of celibacy seriously, still struggling to keep them, it's hard to miss the implication that this poor guy should relax, take a lover, get on with his social work, and be more like Father Thomas. His struggles with his conscience only make him look like a wimpy neurotic.

That's the other paradox of *Priest*. Its creators want us to admire their hero, but their contempt for his calling coaxes

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the audience into feeling, if not contempt, a rather lofty pity for him. Whether or not McGovern and Bird have an agenda to promote with this movie, they are, at the very least, pretty smug secular humanists.

But talented secular humanists, *very* talented. The dingy coziness of a rectory is captured perfectly, as are the squalid yet oddly neighborly streets of Liverpool. With what witty economy Bird portrays the flutter that the good looks of the newly arrived Pilkington cause among the rectory's cleaning staff. How deftly she summarizes the hellishness of the abused child's family by simply panning from the father's gloating face to the despairing visage of his daughter and bringing the camera to rest on the smiling, pathetically unknowing mother.

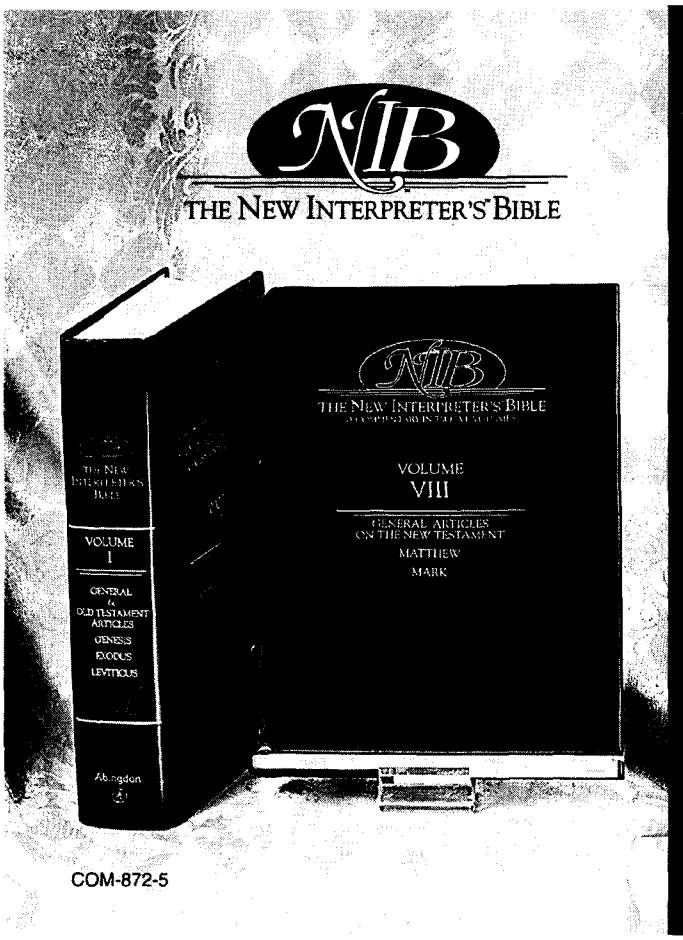
Bird is masterly in conveying two very different sorts of terror. Pilkington, after his first sexual tryst, speeds away on his bicycle. A gay youth (not the lover), also on a bike, happens to pull alongside the priest and keeps pace with him for a moment. Because Bird keeps the camera above the boy's waist as Pilkington looks at him, the youth seems to be flying rather than cycling, as if he were a sprite of pleasure and temptation that the tormented priest cannot shake off.

Terror more stark is in the scene in which the child abuser steps into Pilkington's confessional to warn the priest off his trail. The grillwork of the stall's window makes a pattern on this pervert's face that seems to both fragment the visage and to bloat it as if it were an image in a kaleidoscope. This rapist

may once have acted upon compulsion but has now become an amateur philosopher of sin, boasting of his offense to the priest and outlining a rationale that is as absurd and monstrous as he is. In this scene, Bird's imagery and McGovern's language fuse to create a quick sketch of evil that I won't ever forget.

The homosexual lovemaking in this movie is as explicitly staged as the heterosexual intercourse in most other R-rated films, no more but no less and certainly enough to disgust some people. I found the candor both nonpornographic and absolutely necessary to dramatize the war between spirit and flesh. To comprehend the intense pleasure Pilkington takes with his lover is to understand the pain its illicitness gives him. But don't say I didn't warn you.

RICHARD ALLEVA



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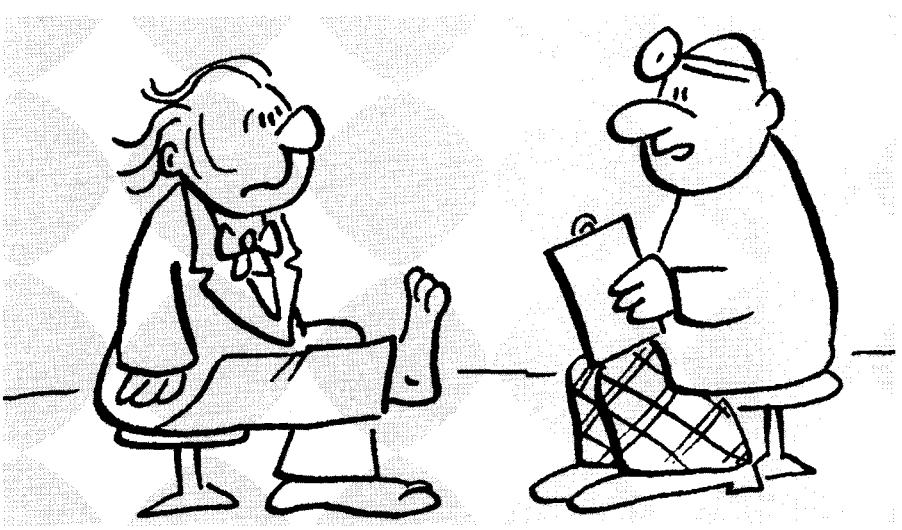
Putting beauty back into theology

PATTERN OF REDEMPTION
The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar
Edward T. Oakes
Continuum Books, $29.50, 334 pp.

Robert P. Imbelli

A dozen years ago I reviewed the English translation of the first volume of von Balthasar's *The Glory of the Lord* (*Commonweal*, November 4, 1983). Since then, the entire seven volumes of his monumental "theological aesthetics" have appeared in English. And this remarkable achievement is itself only the first part of Balthasar's massive trilogy that includes the multivolume *Theo-Drama* (some volumes of which have appeared in English) and the *Theo-Logic* (in process of translation). Many readers are familiar with Balthasar's name and some of his more occasional writings, but whether a new epoch of Catholic theology will begin with him ultimately will be decided by the reception of this great trilogy. Hence the pressing need for a reliable guide through the awesome and intimidating edifice. Oakes's book provides such a guide, disclosing the underlying pattern that structures Balthasar's work, holding myriad details in dynamic tension.

Oakes writes that his book is not so much for the professional theologian as for "the student and general reader curious about this man much rumored about but little known." As one who probably falls under the rubric of "professional theologian," let me attest that members of the guild have much to learn from this book, even as non-professionals will be treated to a demanding, if bracing, theological workout. Oakes rightly allots ample space to the intellectual influences that shaped Balthasar, whose own doctorate was not in theology but in German culture and literature. Goethe and Nietzsche figure as prominently in his background as do his beloved Fathers of the church. Indeed, Balthasar's interest in the Fathers (and Mothers like Elizabeth of Dijon and Thérèse) is never antiquarian; they teach him to engage his own culture as critically and creatively as they did theirs.



"I'm afraid you've got aesthete's foot."

Further, Oakes does not merely report or comment, but genuinely interprets and appropriates Balthasar's thought in a style respectful and enthusiastic, but not hagiographic. Oakes laces his labor of love with references to Pascal and Newman, Hopkins and Eliot, that prove to be not distractions, but helpful elucidations of a theologian who restored "beauty" to the heart of the theological enterprise. For the first part of the trilogy views God's revelation "aesthetically": under the form of the beautiful.

This focus upon beauty allows Balthasar both to appreciate the *eros*, the striving for the beautiful, represented by "Athens," and to celebrate the fulfillment manifested uniquely in "Jerusalem." The revelation of the glory of God on the face of Christ recapitulates and transforms all the intimations of beauty found in nature and history and enraptures the beholder. The believer's proper response is neither demonstration nor defense, but worship and contemplation. Balthasar's stated aim is to provide "a kneeling theology," whose poles are "adoration and sanctity, or love of God and neighbor."

This reforging of the links between theology and spirituality, between study and sanctity, is what makes Balthasar's thought so compelling. Yet it does not entail any retreat from the world, any lessening of commitment to action. Balthasar made a painful decision to leave the Jesuits in 1950, having discerned a call to support and promote a *secular* institute, the Community of Saint John. His theology allows no simplistic separation between orthodoxy and orthopraxis, contemplation and commitment. Rather, "the deeper that action is meant to penetrate, the deeper must be the contemplation that precedes and follows it."

In Balthasar's view, the divorce of the-

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ology and spirituality bears special responsibility for the tragic dissociation of sensibility that has plagued Western Christianity for centuries. Oakes takes up this theme in his chapter, "The Archaeology of Alienated Beauty," rehearsing Balthasar's passionate lament over the devolution that saw "those theologians most attuned to the beauty of the Christian religion" (thinkers and poets like Dante, Pascal, and Péguy) progressively alienated from it. They protest "a narrowing down of Christian theology" to the "timeless pursuit of the schools;" and demand, instead, "an understanding of revelation in the context of the history of the world and the actual present." Dante's great refusal, embodied in the figure of Beatrice, to isolate revelation from contemporary history, epitomizes this genuinely sacramental aesthetic.

In the second part of the trilogy, the *Theo-Drama*, Balthasar presents the dramatic encounter of infinite and finite freedom, of divine grandeur and human dignity. Here the Christological concentration grows most intense, culminating in Balthasar's controversial meditation upon Holy Saturday as Christ's descent among the dead to share their dreadful estrangement from the God of life. This paschal pattern of redemption reveals the pouring out of Love into the depths of abandonment and the power of Love transfiguring even the abyss.

Inspired by the Swiss mystic, Adrienne von Speyr, Balthasar came to see Christ's descent into hell as the consummation of the *kenosis*, the self-emptying of God's Word. In this ultimate revelation of God's glory, beauty is purged of all aestheticism and the action of salvation is accomplished in that disfiguring passion, whose cost is not less than everything. Here the drama of infinite and finite is resolved: infinite freedom is expended and finite freedom raised up in the awesome scene of "converging darkness and expanding light."

Most astoundingly, Oakes avows that in the three-day period of Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday, "*something happens to God*, and this is why this part of the trilogy deserves the title *Theo-Drama* in every sense of the word, being both a subjective as well as an objective prefix." In the light of so radical a vision, how limp and paltry the effort to pigeonhole Balthasar as a "conservative." For, in his thought, "suffering," "loss," and "renewal" are somehow part of God's very life, incorporating "godforsakenness into the trinitarian relation of love."

The *Theo-Logic* draws Balthasar's three-part symphony to its climax. The eternal "logic" of God expresses itself as a "dialogue" of persons: Word of Truth spoken, communion of Spirit shared. Within this eternal rhythm of trinitarian life, the whole historical drama of freedom and sin transpires...and is transformed. The outcome is not fusion, but communion. The human is embraced, not absorbed, by the transcendent Other who is communion of persons: Trinity. So far is Balthasar's theological vision from any monistic and disincarnate Platonism that he can confess: "the deepest thing in Christianity is God's love for the earth."

A sympathetic commentator has written: "[Balthasar] wrote more books than a normal person can be expected to read in a lifetime." How fortunate, then, to have Edward Oakes's erudite and passionate guide to direct our reading (annoying misprints and occasional hasty construction notwithstanding)! For Balthasar's theology leads, with reverence and sureness, to the very threshold of Mystery. □

HOVDA'S GREAT AMEN

ROBERT HOVDA
The Amen Corner
John F. Baldovin, Editor
The Liturgical Press, $15.95, 254 pp.

Karen Sue Smith

Readers of these thirty-one essays will understand why Robert Hovda, who died in 1992, was highly regarded as a liturgist, and why his reflections are as important to the church today as during the ten years (1983–92) in which he composed them for *Worship* magazine.

Throughout the volume Hovda chronicles, guides, addresses, and, occasionally, issues warnings about the ongoing liturgical renewal, but he never sounds depressed, cynical, or even surprised. Despite the pace of reform, its direction, or the number of obstacles in its way, he never sounds lost or uncertain of its course. Hovda is sure-footed without being arrogant.

His ecclesiology is responsible for his sure-footedness. He rejects the image of the church as a retreat from the world or as a towering alternative to it, the church described in the novels of Evelyn Waugh. In Hovda's view, the church is not a perfect society but a work in progress (or at least in process), a "pilgrim entity, full of debate, controversy, and turmoil." He expected conflicts and celebrated differences. The parish is a gathering of sinners—a self-image no assembly can forget or deny without robbing the liturgy of

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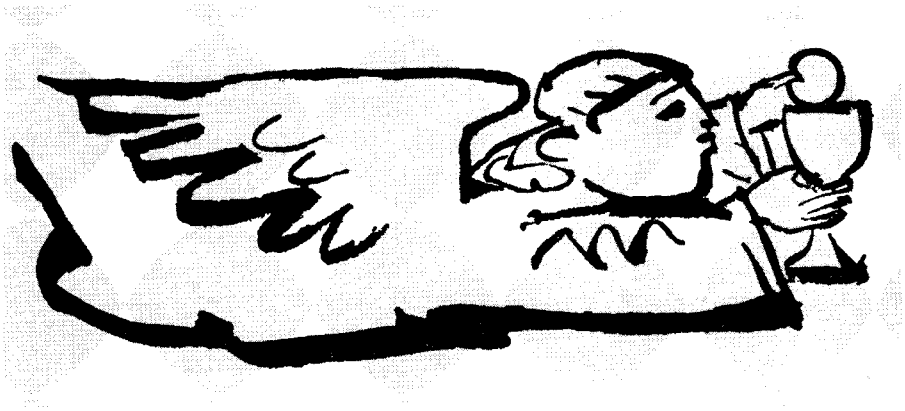

its transforming role in their corporate and personal lives. Only the sick, Jesus said, need a physician. Only sinners, Hovda said, need liturgy.

Since liturgy weds the biblical word to the sacramental deed, the practice of liturgy slowly transforms the assembly, the church, the world. Liturgy is, Hovda writes, "the primary indispensable source" for the Christian life.

The liturgy he envisioned is simple, dignified, and beautiful; its ritual elements—all the nonverbal and symbolic parts—are as important as the words and texts. Liturgy is a "parable in action," inviting us "respectfully into an environment in which godly decisions not only are appropriate but are the only ones that make sense." In liturgy "we act out the reign of God, where we are without distinction equally loved, equally invited to make our own the revealed truth of God's words, equally reverenced and honored with water and incense and kisses and touches, equally sharing the holy plate and the holy cup." In liturgy we find "our sameness and commonness before the holy one"; we are reduced "to creature size."

The conviction that liturgy was an equalizer animated many of Hovda's writings: warnings to priests and other "professional" liturgists—men and women—against the evils of clericalism; teaching that the assembly—not the presider—is the primary celebrant of the Mass; disdain for anything that might give rise to "liturgical stars"; inclusion of gays and lesbians (along with the poor, the disabled, ethnic minorities, and women) in his frequent mention of society's oppressed and marginalized groups; and his suggestion that such groups "should exercise roles of leadership in liturgy."

Despite his inclusiveness, Hovda held to high standards. He insisted that all liturgical ministers be selected on the basis of talent and competence; that music leaders be trained professionals; that worship be allotted an appropriate portion of the parish budget; and that artists be consulted about things liturgical—from the vestments to the vessels, from the interior lighting to the choreography of processions.

I found refreshing Hovda's vision of congregations in which mature Christian adults make decisions of import based on their own faith, knowledge of church tradition, and experience of society at large. "God's word does not supply what we have the brains and the imaginations to create," he wrote.

Hovda thought that reform, like ritual, must be steeped in the church's tradition, connecting the ancient with the present. To young liturgists, he advised, "Why not get your teeth into the tradition, deeply enough to taste and savor, to acquire a foundation, and then trust yourself and the community you serve to make the applications?" Hovda was sanguine about the future of the liturgy.

As for opinions, Hovda had many: he thought highly visible liturgical ministers of all types should wear vestments; Sunday celebrations without a priest should never be accepted as the norm; maleness and celibacy should not be criteria for ordination; parishes should celebrate fewer Masses in general and better ones in particular—all with music. Yet Hovda publicly credited the good intentions of those who disagreed with him. And he could use a light touch when criticizing, as when he feigned curiosity about the term "institutional church," wondering what other kind there was.

Hovda eschewed the church-versus-world dualism and reminded readers that the church exists "for the world, the world God loves." Of course, the world needs improvement. So Hovda railed especially against the Western belief in rugged individualism, which he thought inimical to the very essence of liturgy and its corporate, communal identity. He preached solidarity despite human differences and celebrated a liturgy that relentlessly challenged self-satisfaction.

A Scandinavian from Minnesota, Hovda was once president of the Minneapolis Council of Methodist Youth. He joined the Episcopal church as a student and the Catholic church in 1943, becoming a lifelong advocate of ecumenism. Hovda's early contacts with the Catholic Worker and his pacifism, developed before World War II, cemented his concern for justice and peace. With reconciliation as the heart of liturgy, he saw implicit and natural connections: peace liturgies are the only kind we celebrate, he would say. Hovda believed that liturgy, having formed believers in the ways of reconciliation, ought to enable them to resolve conflict with other peoples and other nations.

Hovda opposed what he called "a classic red herring" brought up by many of his fellow advocates for the poor: that the church's expenditures on beauty were made at their expense. He argued that humanity hungers for bread and for beauty, and that both must be satisfied.

What Hovda wanted most was to promote the reign of God by setting a liturgical table "from which no one is excluded, where all are one and all are free." That was the goal toward which he worked in writing these essays and in his priestly ministry as well. □

REVIEWERS

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KAREN SUE SMITH *is editor of* Church *magazine, published by the National Pastoral Life Center, New York. She is currently researching the life of* New York Times *reporter Anne O'Hare McCormick.*

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Scholars, saints, skeptics & gadflies

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Over the past few years there has been a good deal of news in the popular press about the Qumran scrolls. Some books have put forth tendentious interpretations of the scroll material, while others have demonstrated a penchant for conspiracy theories. It is for those reasons alone that I wish to recommend my colleague Jim VanderKam's book. This is the book for those interested in a sober, careful, and well-written account of the discovery of the scrolls, their meaning, and the current state of research on them.

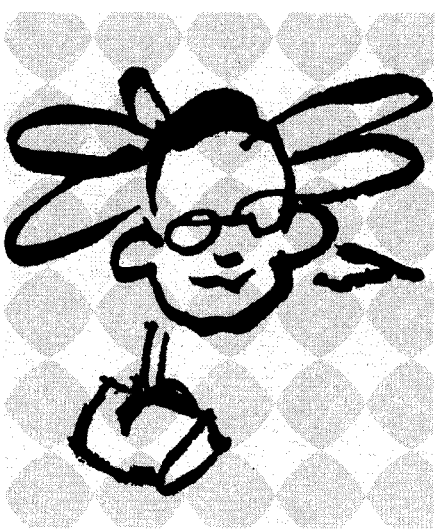
In a well-organized and highly readable account, VanderKam surveys his subject under these general headings: a history of the discoveries; a survey of the manuscript finds; the source of the manuscripts; the hypothesis of Essene provenance (VanderKam holds to this thesis); the relationship of the scrolls to both the Old and New Testaments (along with a very informative discussion of the formation of the biblical canon); and, finally, a survey of current controversies regarding the scrolls. Each chapter has a bibliographical note for further reading; there are several useful maps and some black-and-white illustrations.

The Dead Sea Scrolls Today, *by James VanderKam, Eerdmans/SPCK, $12.99, 206 pp.*

Where there are controverted issues, VanderKam sets out the opposing views, weighs the evidence, and then states his judgment. I am not an expert in these matters, but it does seem that VanderKam is fair to those who have serious scholarly opinions, although he has little patience with the wilder, less serious writers on the scrolls. VanderKam's work makes a nice companion piece to Fitzmyer's *Responses to 101 Questions on the Dead Sea Scrolls* which I reviewed in an earlier column.

Marcus Borg was an active member of the "Jesus Seminar"—that group of scholars that began meeting in 1985 to discuss this question: Which sayings in the Gospels constitute the very words of Jesus as opposed, for example, to sayings which were redacted by the evangelists or created by them or redone to account for post-Easter Christian faith, etc.? The participants devised a calculus of descending historical weight and cast votes: Jesus said this; Jesus may have said this; Jesus probably did not say this; he certainly did not say this. The organizers have published the fruit of their research with color-coded lines to reflect their scholarly consensus.

I am not a New Testament scholar so I watched or heard about their doings from afar and have only recently begun to read some of the results of their work, especially that of John Dominic Crossan and Burton Mack. But my distance from these proceedings has not prevented me from occasionally thinking that the whole enterprise had a slightly pretentious air about it. It kept making me think of the late Ronald Knox's famous send-up in which he used the advanced exegetical techniques of his day to prove that Tennyson's "In Memoriam" was actually written by Queen Victoria.



That conservative personal crochet now being confessed, let me stipulate that there is still much to be learned from what these scholars did (without buying into their method or blindly accepting their educated guesses). Marcus Borg's wonderfully written and passionately argued book is one example of what these New Testament scholars can teach us. Borg first confesses his own personal passage from what Paul Ricoeur called a conversion from first naiveté to second naiveté. In Borg's case, it is the rejection of his unblinkingly conservative Lutheran upbringing and a rediscovery that one can "give one's heart to" (that is, believe) Jesus.

Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time, *by Marcus Borg, HarperSanFrancisco, $16, 150 pp.*

Secondly, Borg shares some of his insights about Jesus after long meditation on the text of the Gospels. I can only mention a few of the observations that I found extremely helpful. Chapters 4 and 5 treat Jesus and Wisdom and Jesus as the Wisdom of God. The latter chapter, especially, is suggestive of ways in which we might think about Christology in a nonChalcedonian manner.

Earlier in the book, Borg contrasts (too sharply?) Jesus as a preacher of compassion and as a preacher of holiness; the former urges solidarity and the latter, separation. Borg emphasizes the Lucan "Be ye compassionate as the Heavenly Father is compassionate" as against the Matthean "Be ye perfect...." As a good friend of mine has observed, "Be ye perfect" has been more misused in the history of Christian spirituality than any other sin-

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gle verse in the New Testament.

There are many other provocative themes, lightly touched on, that could bear comment. I was also struck by what Borg does not treat in any detail: the significance of the Passion of Christ and the central datum of the Resurrection. What he does discuss, however, is well done and repays a careful reading. I learned a good deal and will use some of his more telling comments in my own teaching.

Mark's Gospel has been the focus of much research. In the patristic period it rarely merited full commentaries since it

A Preface to Mark, *by Christopher Bryan, Oxford University Press, $32, 220 pp.*

was widely believed to be a kind of condensation of much fuller materials in the other synoptics. Contemporary scholarship, with its emphasis on Markan priority, contends that Mark is not only a very rich work but one of greater literary and theological complexity than had been earlier recognized. That recognition alone may explain the stream of Markan literature coming from the presses.

Drawing on a good deal of both biblical research and contemporary literary theory, Bryan argues that Mark is a "Life" not dissimilar to the kinds of biographical literature composed in the ancient Greco-Roman world. Furthermore, Mark's "Life" was most likely meant to be read aloud in a cultural-liturgical setting. Bryan makes the plausible argument that this could have meant a reading of the entire text (which can be done in just under two hours). He adduces evidence from what we know of the ancient practices of the Christian church to show that this would not be as strange as we who bridle at fifteen-minute homilies might suppose. In advancing that argument, Bryan reads the text of Mark closely to indicate what he considers the oral substrata (formulaic sayings; paratactic style; the use of inclusio, etc.) of the text. That close reading is quite illuminating.

The second-century writer Papias said that Mark's Gospel was a written version of Peter's preaching. Bryan does not link Mark to Peter but he does seem to like the idea of Mark's text having a relationship to orality. In regards to genre nomenclature, however, I still prefer the Jesuit John Donahue's description of Mark (incorrectly attributed to John Crossan, S.J., by Bryan in one place) as a "kerygmatic narrative" since it neatly captures both the idea of orality and writing.

This is a very well-written book with good bibliographies at the end of the individual chapters. Thorough indices and a final bibliography make the work quite "user friendly." For a nonexpert like myself, it was immensely informative. One odd note: in all my years of reviewing books, this is the first one I have come across dedicated to two deceased dogs; an act of canine *pietas* that irritated more than it edified.

Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-67) belongs to that first generation of Cistercian writers, along with Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, who, in the words of Etienne Gilson, gave

Brother and Lover: Aelred of Rievaulx, *by Brian Patrick McGuire, Crossroad, $22.95, 186 pp.*

up everything for God except the art of writing well. We have a large number of his writings (some yet to be translated into English) which have been the subject of much scholarly research. Aelred has been the focus of intense interest over the past decade or two because of John Boswell's (in)famous suggestion that Aelred was a gay apologist, especially in his treatise on spiritual friendship.

Professor McGuire, an American teaching in Denmark who is a distinguished scholar of matters Cistercian, examines the life and writings of this important medieval spiritual writer, with one eye on the controverted judgment of Boswell. McGuire convincingly argues that Aelred had little interest in friendship between men and women; that Aelred probably did have homoerotic relationships before becoming a monk; and that he probably did think of friendship in the monastery through the prism of his own experiences. Alone among monastic writers, Aelred encouraged friendships in the monastery and had none of the fear of "particular friendships" which were such a commonplace in monastic literature. By becoming a monk Aelred "entered a world of friendship where all the erotic intensity of men could be transformed into agapetic joy." McGuire is especially good at a close reading of the surviving works of Aelred, especially his major work, *The Mirror of Charity*. Despite the modest disclaimer that he did not wish to study Aelred theologically, McGuire sheds much light on the sources of Aelred's writings, makes judicious pronouncements on the intentions of the writer, and carefully discriminates Aelred's own worldview from that of contemporary discussions about sexuality. This book is a nice complement to the author's earlier *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience* (Cistercian Publications, 1988).

Those interested in the history of spirituality will find this a solidly scholarly study of an important writer. While obviously a learned book, it is free of footnotes. At the end of the book there is a short bibliographical essay providing background reading for each of the individual chapters.

Father Adalbert's little monograph on monastic fasting is just the sort of book that I love: a passionately written, scholarly annotated, and illuminating treatment of some small offbeat corner of the Catholic experience. The basic thesis of this work is simple enough: the earliest strain of monastic experience proposed that monks eat once a day in the late afternoon; that they "love fasting" (the phrase is Benedict's in the *Rule*); that this usage has, over the centuries, fallen into decline; and that it should be reconsidered as part of monastic *ascesis*.

To Love Fasting: The Monastic Experience, *by Adalbert de Vogue', Saint Bede's Publications, $9.95, 137 pp.*

The author himself has followed this regime for over ten years and takes pain to show how he came to do it, what the merits of such a plan are, and why it should

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be part of monastic life. He admits that his eremetical life makes it easier to follow such a practice, but he thinks it is possible for those in community to regain this ancient form of living.

Adalbert is a distinguished monastic scholar, and this book will be of interest mainly to those in the cloister. Nonetheless, the author raises some important tangential questions for the church that merit at least some reflection. Was it a net gain for Christian living that the Western church abandoned the discipline of abstinence and fasting? Is it curious that precisely at the time when such a discipline was modified practically out of existence we had an explosion in the West of diet plans, fat farms, calorie counting, and the like? Have we ever considered new ways of fasting (in solidarity with the poor; to focus ourselves for prayer or the liturgy, etc.) that would not be simply a form of "punishment" or "discipline"? What is the precise relationship of prayer, almsgiving, and fasting—those "acts of religion" (as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls them)? Father Adalbert has some words on this latter question that may repay reading. In sum: a book which manages to put forth ideas that may be worthwhile considering beyond the rather narrow audience for whom it was intended.

Hans Küng's recent work is an attempt to provide a "simple introduction to Christian theology" with a double focus: What is its subject matter? How is it done? Küng does this by a brief study of seven pivotal

Great Christian Thinkers, *by Hans Küng, Crossroad, $24.95., 235 pp.*

thinkers in the history of theology: Paul, Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Schleiermacher, and Barth. Each thinker gets a long chapter in which Küng focuses on the fidelity of each to the message of Jesus Christ; his engagement with the culture of his own day; and whether or not he provided a paradigm shift in theology.

Küng is a theologian with a point of view and a sharp critical sense. He has strong opinions and does not hesitate to state them. One must distinguish Küng the historian from Küng the polemicist and partisan. It is sadly the case that the latter Küng sometimes overwhelms the former. His discussion of Thomas Aquinas is a case in point. Küng faults Aquinas for his failure to engage in a dialogue with Islam at any level beyond that of the philosophical. He then argues further that Aquinas is not a creator of new paradigms because Thomas "put his theology at the service of dogmatic papolatry [*sic*]." The proof Küng adduces is a minor treatise ("Against the Errors of the Greeks") which defends papal primacy against the Eastern church. The plain fact of the matter is that Thomas was a loyal son of Rome but papal claims were hardly his major concern (in the *Summa* papal claims merit only a glance). As Brian Tierney demonstrated years ago, if one wants to trace the growth of papal claims one should look at the canonists and the Franciscans involved in the poverty debate.

Apart from such polemics one must also wonder whether Küng's theology is just not too oriented to the rather hermetic world of Germany. Schleiermacher may be important for the development of that theology, but was he more crucial than Newman (whose influence would be felt at Vatican II) or Kierkegaard (who was the *fons et origo* of modern existentialism)? Was Barth (is Barth?) a true postmodern theologian? Is his influence more lasting than that of Tillich? It depends on which side of the Atlantic one lives. Do the liberation theologians provide us with a new emerging paradigm forcing new questions and new locations from which we must query the word of God?

These and other questions came into my head as I read this unfailingly interesting but idiosyncratic tour of the theological horizon. Indeed, Küng's continuing contribution to current theological debates may well be the gadfly energy with which he forces us to respond to his urgent sense of what theology is and how it is to be articulated. *Great Christian Thinkers* is one of those books which causes me to say mentally, "Wait a minute," or "No—that is not quite right." Such books cannot be dismissed no matter how much they may irritate. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

plation." Quite the contrary. In accord with Vatican II's clear mandate, the missal of Paul VI calls for periods of (communal) silence at the penitential rite and after the invitations to pray, at the conclusion of a reading or homily, and after Communion. These were innovations in the reform (*see* No. 23 of the general introduction in the sacramentary)—times of silence totally absent in the unrevised liturgy. Perhaps Ms. Kramer should bring this to the attention of presiding celebrants of her acquaintance.

(MSGR.) FREDERICK R. McMANUS

The writer is professor emeritus in canon law at The Catholic University of America.

Change the recipe

San Francisco, Calif.

To the Editors: There's just no keeping some people pleased, no matter what they had for breakfast. What we liked: Pope John Paul II's *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (though the interviewer was truly emetic—good thing that was a light breakfast); Peter Steinfels's review [January 13]; and Jim Bowman's letter [March 10] expressing objections, varying in persuasiveness, to the book, the review, and so on. What disappointed us: Peter Steinfels's flippant brush-off of his friend's concerns. More herb tea, anyone?

LINDA and JULIAN IRIAS

Toward mature faith

Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y.

To the Editors: Dennis O'Brien's academically astute positioning of my *Beyond Naive Belief* [March 10] within the context of "Scripture for Skeptics" ignores its other audiences: both the overly credulous and those struggling against a clerical establishment that substitutes obedience for faith. I only invoke the "common doom of...If" to thread a path beyond it. Not content with the Enlightenment's self-myth, I propose that it needs to be transcended, not fought tooth-and-

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nail as if we could unmake it.

I see this form of religious affirmation adumbrated in mystical theology's *via negativa*, which originally "whispered no." Religious utterance should thunder in liturgical, doxological "Amen," not in dogmatic anathemas and papal declamations (so many of which have miscarried). Mature faith's hunches are not weak efforts, but informed risks which—like (second) marriage vows—should be chastened because purged of youthful narcissism. Jesus is *God*'s "Yes" to all God's promises, but faith-affirmation tends to fetishize a part of what has been promised for the Whole—Rahner's definition of "ideology."

My effort to resymbolize modern papal doctrines risks taking on even the narcissism of papal infallibility to relocate its paradoxical, not literal, truth in Freud's notion of transferential dynamics. Though itself risky, it is a necessary step toward a new freedom of mature believers to assent to Christ's presence in the church-at-worship (and only derivatively in the church-in-committee), even while suffering his real absence "until he comes again."

Even with these corrections, I am grateful for Mr. O'Brien's sympathetic reading and his desire for thunderous faith-affirmations.

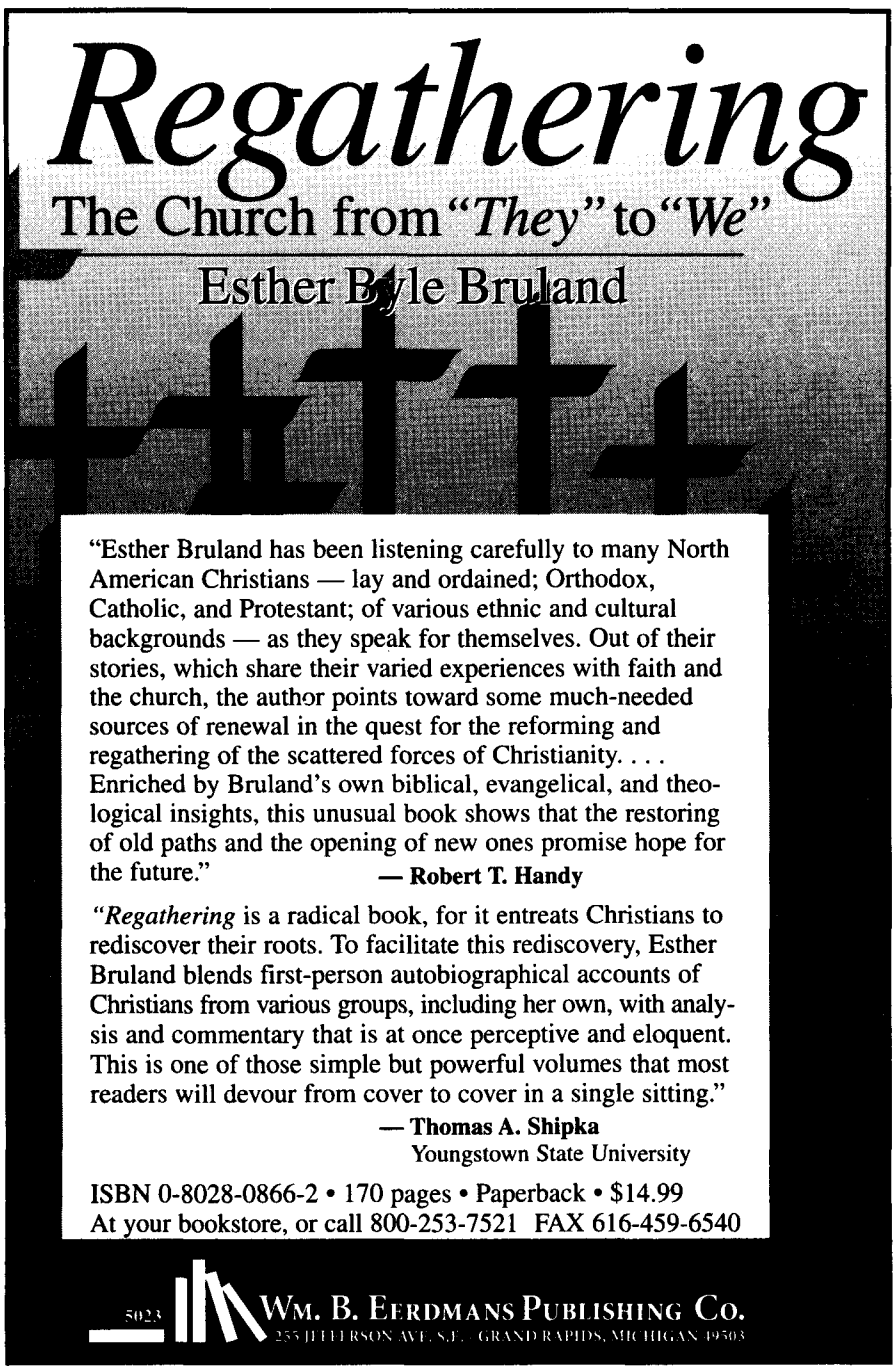
PAUL E. DINTER

Racism is the root

Cambridge, N.Y.

To the Editors: Re: "Catholics Go Republican" [January 13]: This entire trend may be captured in a single word: racism. The same can be said of the much-discussed Proposition 187 in California. Why consume space and your readers' time on such shallow discussion?

WALTER G. HOOKE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'God does not need our lies'

THOMAS J. SHELLEY

Forty years ago, Monsignor John Tracy Ellis wrote an essay, "American Catholics and the Intellectual Life" (*Thought*, Fall 1955), that left a lasting impression on American Catholicism. A major theme in the essay was the need for intellectual integrity in Catholic scholarship. One of the first places where Ellis ever spoke his mind publicly on this subject, however, was in the pages of *Commonweal* in an article that appeared on February 2, 1934.

At that time *Commonweal* was only ten years old, and Ellis was Mr. John Tracy Ellis, an obscure twenty-nine-year-old layman who was teaching European history at the College of Saint Teresa in Winona, Minnesota (population 20,850). The Catholic press had recently been surfeited with articles commemorating the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, Pope Leo XIII's seminal encyclical on Catholic social teaching. Ellis used the occasion to call attention to "Another Anniversary" in the life of the great pontiff, not another encyclical (Leo issued no fewer than eighty-five of them), but the golden anniversary of a letter Leo wrote on August 18, 1883, on the subject of church history, when he opened the Vatican Archives to scholars and researchers.

In that letter, Leo quoted with approval the words of Cicero that the first duty of a historian is not to tell a lie, and the second duty is not to be afraid to tell the truth. "From the day Leo's letter appeared," wrote Ellis, "it has, and must ever remain, the *vade mecum* of the Catholic historian." In opening the Vatican Archives to all scholars, the pontiff showed that he was practicing what he was preaching, at least to a degree. One of the first historians to take advantage of the Vatican Archives was Ludwig von Pastor of the University of Innsbruck, who was encouraged by the pope to write a scholarly history of the Renaissance and Counter-Reformation popes in response to the critical history of the popes that had been written by Leopold von Ranke.

Ellis heaped praise upon Leo for making possible the scholarly work of Pastor. "Through the materials which Leo's opening of the Vatican Archives brought to his hand," said Ellis, "[Pastor] was able to lay bare the full panorama of papal history in one of its most troubled periods, the religious revolution of the sixteenth century." What young Mr. Ellis did not know, and could not know, was that Pastor's access to the materials in the Vatican Archives was much less complete than he thought. Not until forty-two years after he began work on his history of the popes did Pastor obtain permission to *visit* the storerooms where the materials were kept. Nonetheless, Ellis was correct to praise Leo for his decision to open the archives, for, as Owen Chadwick, the former Regius Professor of Modern History in Cambridge University, once said, Leo's decision brought "new confidence among instructed non-Catholics that the Catholic church cared about the truth."

Ellis also praised Leo for recognizing that the object of history, including church history, is truth, not edification. Many pages in Pastor's history of the popes are not especially edifying, but Leo did not complain or seek to curb Pastor's independence. Indeed, Ellis was delighted to be able to quote from an all-but-forgotten encyclical of 1899 (*Depuis le jour*) Leo's caustic comment that "God does not want our lies." In that same encyclical, which was devoted to the education of the clergy, Leo told church historians that they would be better able to manifest the church's divine origin if they were "to keep back nothing of the trials which she has had to experience in the course of the ages through the frailty of her children, and sometimes even of her ministers."

Said Ellis proudly: "Such is the spirit in which Leo XIII would have history written." Not all Catholic ecclesiastics shared the enlightened opinions of the Holy Father. Only a few years earlier William Cardinal O'Connell of Boston had complained to Monsignor Peter Guilday, professor of church history at The Catholic University of America and Ellis's mentor, about the candid character of his biography of John England, the first bishop of Charleston [*see* page 18]. "How much permanent good comes out of digging up the bones of dead bishops, spending years in musty archives to find in the end such sordid quarrels," asked O'Connell. "Is all this edifying to the public? I wonder." In the face of such episcopal obscurantism, it was comforting and clever for Ellis to invoke papal authority and to say that those church historians who wrote honest history, warts and all, were only fulfilling "the mandate given by Leo fifty years ago."

In his later years, when he was the unquestioned dean of American Catholic church historians, Ellis rarely gave a speech or wrote an article without including a quotation from Cardinal Newman. Evidently the practice went back a long time, for he concluded his 1934 *Commonweal* article with a golden nugget from Newman's *Historical Sketches*, in which the English cardinal mentioned "the endemic perennial fidget which possesses us about giving scandal; facts are omitted in great histories, or glosses are put upon memorable acts, because they are thought not edifying, whereas of all scandals, such omissions, such glosses, are the greatest."

Forty years ago, *Commonweal* praised Ellis's essay in *Thought* as a "trenchant analysis," and agreed with Ellis that American Catholics should do some soul searching about their meagre contribution to American intellectual life. It was in *Commonweal* two decades earlier that Ellis served notice of his commitment to that cause. □

The Rev. Thomas J. Shelley is professor of church history at Saint Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, New York.

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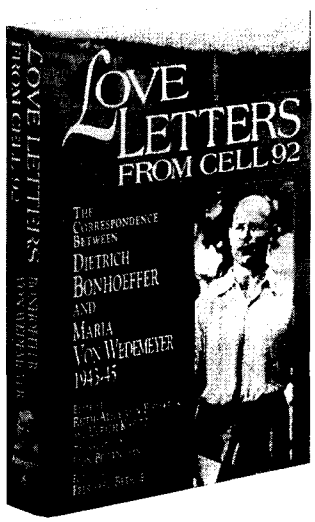

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Edited by Ruth-Alice von Bismarck and Ulrich Kabitz
Translated by John Brownjohn
Postscript by Eberhard Bethge

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